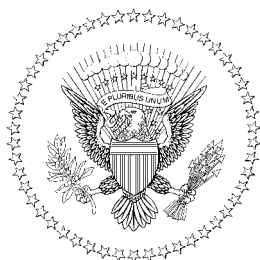


Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



Monday, December 22, 2003
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WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Week Ending Friday, December 19, 2003

**Statement on Signing the Syria
Accountability and Lebanese
Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003**

December 12, 2003

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 1828, the "Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003." The Act is intended to strengthen the ability of the United States to conduct an effective foreign policy.

Section 5 of the Act purports to impose upon the President requirements to take certain actions against Syria unless the President either determines and certifies to the Congress that the Government of Syria has taken specific actions, or determines that it is in the national security interest of the United States to waive such requirements and reports the reasons for that determination to the Congress. A law cannot burden or infringe the President's exercise of a core constitutional power by attaching conditions precedent to the use of that power. The executive branch shall construe and implement section 5 in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to conduct the Nation's foreign affairs and as Commander in Chief, in particular with respect to the conduct of foreign diplomats in the United States, the conduct of United States diplomats abroad, and the exportation of items and provision of services necessary to the performance of official functions by United States Government personnel abroad.

Section 6 of the Act requires an officer in the executive branch to furnish information to the Congress on various subjects involving Syria and terrorism. The executive branch shall construe section 6 in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to withhold information the disclosure of which could impair foreign relations, national security, the deliberative processes

of the Executive, or the performance of the Executive's constitutional duties.

My approval of the Act does not constitute my adoption of the various statements of policy in the Act as U.S. foreign policy. Given the Constitution's commitment to the Presidency of the authority to conduct the Nation's foreign affairs, the executive branch shall construe such policy statements as advisory, giving them the due weight that comity between the legislative and executive branches should require, to the extent consistent with U.S. foreign policy.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 12, 2003.

NOTE: H.R. 1828, approved December 12, was assigned Public Law No. 108-175. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

**Statement on Signing the Vision
100—Century of Aviation
Reauthorization Act**

December 12, 2003

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 2115, the "Vision 100—Century of Aviation Reauthorization Act." The Act is designed to strengthen America's aviation sector, provide needed authority to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and enhance the safety of the traveling public.

Subtitle A of title II of the Act amends section 106 of title 49 of the United States Code to abolish the Air Traffic Services Subcommittee of the Federal Aviation Management Advisory Council and creates, separate from the Council, an Air Traffic Services Committee (ATSC). Section 106 as amended vests in the ATSC substantial governmental authority, including the power to approve the FAA's strategic plan for the air traffic control

system, certain large procurements, appointment and pay of the FAA Chief Operating Officer, FAA major reorganizations, and the FAA cost accounting and financial management structure. Under section 106(p)(6)(C), as amended, the members of the abolished Air Traffic Services Subcommittee of the Council automatically become the members of the ATSC, but only to “serve in an advisory capacity,” with the ATSC beginning to exercise non-advisory authority when the ATSC members have been appointed by the President by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. Accordingly, in light of section 106(p)(6)(C), the executive branch shall construe the provisions of section 106(p) and 106(r) that refer to approval or other non-advisory functions of the ATSC to require, from the date of enactment of the Act through the date on which the last Senate-confirmed Presidential appointment is made to the ATSC, only notice to the ATSC and an opportunity for the ATSC to express its views.

Section 106(p)(7)(B)(iii) of title 49, as enacted by section 202 of the bill, purports to limit the qualifications of the pool of persons from whom the President may select ATSC members in a manner that rules out a large portion of those persons best qualified by experience and knowledge to fill the office. Congressional participation in such appointments is limited by the Appointments Clause of the Constitution to the Senate’s provision of advice and consent with respect to Presidential nominees. The executive branch shall construe the provisions concerning qualifications in section 106(p)(7)(B)(iii) as advisory, as is consistent with the Appointments Clause.

Section 47171 of title 49, as enacted by section 304(a) of the Act, purports to mandate the process for cooperation among agencies in the executive branch in conducting environmental reviews for certain airport projects. In particular, section 47171(i) purports to require one part of the executive branch to report to committees of Congress when a second part of the executive branch has not met the first part’s deadlines for action on certain environmental reviews, and then requires the second part to explain to the committees why it did not meet the

deadline and what actions it intends to take to complete the relevant matter. The executive branch shall implement section 47171 in a manner and to the extent consistent with the President’s constitutional authority to supervise the unitary executive branch.

The executive branch shall construe and implement section 323(b)(2) of the Act, relating to certain disputes, in a manner consistent with the constitutional authority of the President to supervise the unitary executive branch.

The executive branch shall construe the provisions of section 411(i) of the Act, concerning the provision of executive branch information and records to the National Commission on Small Community Air Service, in a manner consistent with the President’s constitutional authority to withhold information the disclosure of which could impair the foreign relations, the national security, the deliberative processes of the Executive, or the performance of the Executive’s constitutional duties.

The executive branch shall construe and implement section 46111 of title 49, as enacted by section 601(a) of the Act, relating to access to and use of classified information, in a manner consistent with the President’s constitutional authority to classify and control access to information bearing on the national security.

The executive branch shall implement sections 702 and 703 of the Act, which relate to the award of certain government scholarships, in a manner consistent with the equal protection requirements of the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution.

Section 44511(f) of title 49, as enacted by section 712 of the Act, requires the Secretary of Transportation to appoint “an independent governing board” for a 4-year airport cooperative research pilot program. The executive branch shall construe the reference to the board as “independent” to mean independence within the Department of Transportation from the FAA, while the board remains subject to the statutory authority of the Secretary as the head of the Department and the President’s constitutional authority to supervise the unitary executive branch.

Moreover, the executive branch shall construe the provisions for nomination of candidates for the board by particular officials or organizations as advisory, as is consistent with the Appointments Clause of the Constitution.

The executive branch shall construe as advisory the provisions of section 812(a) of the Act that purport to direct or burden the conduct of negotiations by the executive branch with foreign governments, international organizations, or other entities abroad. Such provisions, if construed as mandatory rather than advisory, would impermissibly interfere with the President's constitutional authority to conduct the Nation's foreign affairs, participate in international negotiations, and supervise the unitary executive branch.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 12, 2003.

NOTE: H.R. 2115, approved December 12, was assigned Public Law No. 108-176. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address *December 13, 2003*

Good morning. This week I was honored to sign the Medicare Act of 2003, the greatest advance in health coverage for America's seniors since Medicare was founded nearly four decades ago. This new law will give seniors better choices and more control over their health care and provide a prescription drug benefit.

Beginning in 2006, most seniors now without prescription coverage can expect to see their current drug bills cut roughly in half in exchange for a monthly premium of about \$35. And for the first time, seniors will have peace of mind that they will not face unlimited expenses for their Medicare.

These and other major improvements in Medicare came about because Republicans and Democrats in Congress were willing to work together for the interests of our senior citizens. We were able to pass this law because we listened to the people, set the right

priorities, and worked hard until we finished the job.

The reform and modernization of Medicare was one milestone in a year of accomplishment. We worked with Congress to take action in a number of areas on behalf of the American people. Last May, the House and Senate passed my jobs-and-growth package into law, delivering substantial tax relief to 91 million Americans. We reduced taxes for everyone who pays income taxes, increased the child tax credit, cut the taxes on dividends and capital gains, and gave 23 million small-business owners incentives to invest for the future.

And now we are seeing the results. In the third quarter, the economy grew at the fastest pace in almost 20 years. Productivity, manufacturing, and housing construction are expanding, and we have added over 300,000 jobs since August. The tax relief we passed is working, and our economy is gaining strength.

Legislation passed this year also showed the compassion and the good heart of America. We created the American Dream Downpayment Fund to help low-income citizens afford the downpayment on homes of their own. We defended children from the violence of partial birth abortion and passed new incentives to promote the adoption of children in foster care. And we acted to fight the global spread of AIDS by launching a multiyear emergency effort to prevent millions of new infections in Africa and the Caribbean and to provide medicine and humane care to millions more who suffer.

This year we took important action to protect the environment. Our whole Nation saw the devastation left by wildfires in the West, and we passed healthy forest legislation to thin the underbrush that fuels catastrophic blazes.

Our Government also took urgent action on every front in the war on terror. Congress appropriated more than \$31 billion for the Department of Homeland Security to prepare first-responders and safeguard our ports and infrastructure and help scientists develop vaccines against dangerous biological threats. Our country stood behind the men and women of our Armed Forces as they liberated Iraq and helped carry out the work of

reconstruction there and in Afghanistan. In Congress, members of both parties worked together to provide vital resources for our troops, who are fulfilling their responsibility to defend the Nation.

All these actions have made us safer, more prosperous, and a better country. We confronted problems with determination and bipartisan spirit. Yet our work is not done. There will be pressing business in the new year on issues from job creation to health care to public schools. And above all, we will continue to fight the war on terror until the war is won.

On behalf of all Americans, I thank the Congress for a productive year. Working together, we can add to this progress in the year to come.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:35 a.m. on December 12 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 13. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 12 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on Signing the Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004

December 13, 2003

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 2417, the "Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004." The Act authorizes funding for United States intelligence activities, including activities in the war against terrorists of global reach.

Section 506A(c) of the National Security Act of 1947, as enacted by section 312(b) of the Act, purports to require the President to request that the Congress enact laws appropriating funding for a major intelligence system procurement in an amount set as a cost estimate by an entity subordinate to the President or to explain why the President instead requests amounts below those levels. Moreover, beginning with the submittal to the Congress of the President's budget for FY 2006, section 312(d)(2) of H.R. 2417 pur-

ports to condition the obligation or expenditure of funds for development or procurement of a major intelligence system on the President's compliance with the requirements of section 506A. The executive branch shall construe these provisions in a manner consistent with the Constitution's commitment to the President of exclusive authority to submit for the consideration of the Congress such measures as the President judges necessary and expedient and to supervise the unitary executive branch, and to withhold information the disclosure of which could impair the deliberative processes of the Executive or the performance of the Executive's constitutional duties.

Section 341(b) purports to require the Attorney General and the Director of Central Intelligence, acting through particular offices subordinate to them respectively, to establish certain policies and procedures relating to espionage prosecutions. The executive branch shall implement this provision in a manner consistent with the authority committed exclusively to the President by the Constitution to faithfully execute the laws and to supervise the unitary executive branch. Similarly, sections 1102(a) and 1102(c) of the National Security Act, as enacted by section 341(a) of the Act, purport to mandate that the Director of Central Intelligence use or act through the Office of National Counterintelligence Executive to establish and implement an inspection process for all agencies and departments of the U.S. Government that handle classified information. The executive branch shall implement this provision in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to supervise the unitary executive branch.

The executive branch shall construe and implement section 376 of the Act, relating to making available classified information to courts, in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to classify and control access to information bearing on the national security and consistent with the statutory authority of the Attorney General for the conduct of litigation for the United States.

Many provisions of the Act, including section 106 and subtitle D of title III of the Act, seek to require the executive branch to

furnish information to the Congress on various subjects. The executive branch shall construe the provisions in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to withhold information the disclosure of which could impair foreign relations, national security, the deliberative processes of the Executive, or the performance of the Executive's constitutional duties.

The executive branch shall implement section 319 of the Act in a manner consistent with the requirement to afford equal protection of the laws under the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution.

Section 502 purports to place restrictions on use of the U.S. Armed Forces and other personnel in certain operations. The executive branch shall construe the restrictions in section 502 as advisory in nature, so that the provisions are consistent with the President's constitutional authority as Commander in Chief, including for the conduct of intelligence operations, and to supervise the unitary executive branch.

Section 106 enacts by reference certain requirements set forth in the joint explanatory statement of the House-Senate committee of conference or in a classified annex. The executive branch continues to discourage this practice of enacting secret laws and encourages instead appropriate non-binding uses of classified schedules of authorizations, classified annexes to committee reports, and joint statements of managers that accompany the final legislation.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 13, 2003.

NOTE: H.R. 2417, approved December 13, was assigned Public Law No. 108-177.

Address to the Nation on the Capture of Saddam Hussein *December 14, 2003*

Good afternoon. Yesterday, December the 13th, at around 8:30 p.m., Baghdad time, United States military forces captured Saddam Hussein alive. He was found near a farmhouse outside the city of Tikrit, in a swift

raid conducted without casualties, and now the former dictator of Iraq will face the justice he denied to millions.

The capture of this man was crucial to the rise of a free Iraq. It marks the end of the road for him and for all who bullied and killed in his name. For the Ba'athist holdouts largely responsible for the current violence, there will be no return to the corrupt power and privilege they once held. For the vast majority of Iraqi citizens who wish to live as free men and women, this event brings further assurance that the torture chambers and the secret police are gone forever.

And this afternoon, I have a message for the Iraqi people: You will not have to fear the rule of Saddam Hussein ever again. All Iraqis who take the side of freedom have taken the winning side. The goals of our coalition are the same as your goals: Sovereignty for your country; dignity for your great culture; and for every Iraqi citizen, the opportunity for a better life. In the history of Iraq, a dark and painful era is over. A hopeful day has arrived. All Iraqis can now come together and reject violence and build a new Iraq.

The success of yesterday's mission is a tribute to our men and women now serving in Iraq. The operation was based on the superb work of intelligence analysts who found the dictator's footprints in a vast country. The operation was carried out with skill and precision by a brave fighting force. Our service men and women and our coalition allies have faced many dangers in the hunt for members of the fallen regime and in their effort to bring hope and freedom to the Iraqi people. Their work continues, and so do the risks. Today, on behalf of the Nation, I thank the members of our Armed Forces, and I congratulate them.

I also have a message for all Americans: The capture of Saddam Hussein does not mean the end of violence in Iraq. We still face terrorists who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the rise of liberty in the heart of the Middle East. Such men are a direct threat to the American people, and they will be defeated.

We've come to this moment through patience and resolve and focused action, and that is our strategy moving forward. The war on terror is a different kind of war, waged

capture by capture, cell by cell, and victory by victory. Our security is assured by our perseverance and by our sure belief in the success of liberty, and the United States of America will not relent until this war is won.

May God bless the people of Iraq, and may God bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:15 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Death of William V. Roth, Jr.

December 14, 2003

During his extraordinary career as a United States Senator, Bill Roth was the taxpayer's friend and the people's champion. He worked to cut wasteful Government spending and was one of the first to argue that lower taxes would lead to greater economic growth. Among his many other legislative achievements, he helped create the retirement account that bears his name and that has benefited millions of American families. He was an American hero, earning a Bronze Star for his service in World War II. Bill Roth was loved and respected by the people of Delaware and by his colleagues in the United States Congress. Laura and I send our condolences to his wife, Jane, herself a dedicated public servant and superb Federal judge; to the Roth family; and to the Roths' many friends in Delaware and throughout the country.

The President's News Conference

December 15, 2003

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated. Thank you for coming to this, the last press conference of the year 2003.

Before I begin, I do want to talk a little bit about a meeting I just attended. Rend al-Rahim is here—she's the representative from the Iraqi Government, the interim Government, to the United States—as well as Dr. Khadir Abbas, who is the interim Minister of Health. We just had an interesting discussion in the Roosevelt Room about the health

needs of Iraq, about the future of the health care system in Iraq. And we were joined by doctors, Iraqi doctors who were anxious to work with their fellow counterparts here in America to enhance educational opportunities and to get caught up on the latest technologies in health care.

The thing that struck me about the meeting was the kind of joy that they expressed about being free. It was a touching meeting, and I want to thank you all for coming. And Doc, I want to thank you for your good work. We are making progress together in improving the lives of your citizens with better health care. Immunization rates are up. People are getting better health care.

He was reminding me, I think the budget of Saddam Hussein's Government for health was, like, \$16 million, less than a dollar per person. And of course, we're spending a lot more than that now on health care in Iraq. But it was a very meaningful meeting. I want to thank you—please thank those good docs for being there.

This weekend's capture of Saddam Hussein was a great moment for the people of Iraq. Iraqi citizens have lost a source of fear, and they can now focus with confidence on the task of creating a hopeful and self-governing nation. With the capture of the former dictator, the enemies of a free Iraq have lost their leader, and they've lost any hope of regaining power. The nightmare of the Ba'athist tyranny is finally over.

The terrorists in Iraq remain dangerous. The work of our coalition remains difficult and will require further sacrifice. Yet, it should now be clear to all, Iraq is on the path to freedom, and a free Iraq will serve the peace and security of America and the world.

This achievement comes at the end of an extraordinary year for our country, abroad and here at home. In 2003, we have become a safer, more prosperous, and better nation. Our Armed Forces, joined by our allies, continue on the offensive against terrorist enemies around the world. We continue our systematic hunt for Al Qaida leaders and Al Qaida cells in many countries. I want to thank the Congress for standing behind our military with needed resources and for giving

vital support to the work of reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan.

America's economy is growing at a robust pace and beginning to generate new jobs for America, American workers. I want to thank the Congress for passing my jobs-and-growth package, which is doing just what it was supposed to do. And we will continue pursuing a progrowth agenda next year.

In this year of accomplishment, we passed Medicare reform. American seniors can now look forward to prescription drug coverage, more choices, and a stronger Medicare system. I want to thank the Congress for coming together to get the job done.

This session of Congress has also produced vital action on homeland security, healthy forests, global AIDS relief, housing assistance, adoption, Amber alerts to capture kidnapers and rescue their victims, and protection of children from partial birth abortion. Members of both political parties can take pride in the important goals we have met by working together.

We have a great deal to show for our efforts in 2003. Yet, unfinished business remains. The majority in both Houses support a comprehensive energy bill as well as reforms in class action to curtail junk lawsuits. The House also passed a medical liability reform bill. It is stuck in the Senate. These measures were blocked, and they are needed. They are needed to help America become more prosperous, and they're needed to help America be a better place. When the House and Senate return in January, there will be more to do, and I look forward to working with them. I've got a few ideas about what we can do together in the year 2004.

As we end 2003, we have a lot to be thankful for, especially for the fine men and women who wear our country's uniform and who will spend their holidays far from home. I hope all Americans will keep these brave men and women in their thoughts and prayers during this blessed season.

I will take some questions, starting with AP man [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Trial of Saddam Hussein

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. What's the United States going to do with Saddam Hussein after questioning him? Will he be turned

over to Iraqis for trial? And based on what you know now about mass executions and hundreds of thousands of graves, do you think that execution should be an option?

The President. He will be detained. We will work with the Iraqis to develop a way to try him in a—that will stand international scrutiny, I guess is the best way to put it.

I shared my sentiments today with Prime Minister Martin of Canada. He asked me about Saddam Hussein and his trial. I said, "Look, the Iraqis need to be very much involved. He was the person that—they were the people that were brutalized by this man." He murdered them. He gassed them. He tortured them. He had rape rooms. And they need to be very much involved in the process, and we'll work with the Iraqis to develop a process.

And of course we want it to be fair. And of course we want the world to say, "Well, this—he got a fair trial," because whatever justice is meted out needs to stand international scrutiny. I've got my own personal views of how he ought to be treated, but that's—I'm not an Iraqi citizen. It's going to be up to the Iraqis to make those decisions.

Q. And the question of execution?

The President. Yes, I said I have my personal views, and this is a brutal dictator. He's a person who killed a lot of people. But my views, my personal views aren't important in this matter. What matters is the views of the Iraqi citizens. And we need to work, of course, with them to develop a system that is fair and—where he will be put on trial and will be brought to justice, the justice he didn't, by the way, afford any of his own fellow citizens.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Impact of Saddam Hussein's Capture on U.S. Policy

Q. Thank you, sir. Will Saddam's capture accelerate the timetable for pulling U.S. troops out and increase the likelihood of getting more foreign troops involved?

The President. We will stay the course until the job is done, Steve. And the temptation is to try to get the President or somebody to put a timetable on the definition of getting the job done. We're just going to stay the course. And it's very important for the Iraqi

people to know that. I've expressed that to Rend; I've told that to the Iraqi citizens with whom I have met on a regular basis.

I tell them two things: One, you can count on America remaining until the job is done. And it's important for them to hear that, because there will probably be some that will continue to test our will. They'll try to kill in hopes that we will flee, and the citizens of Iraq need to know we will stay the course. I also tell them that now is a chance to seize the opportunity and show the world that which this Government believes, and that is, you're plenty capable of governing yourself.

And the level of the troops in Iraq will depend upon the security situation on the ground, and those decisions will be made by our commanders. I have not changed my philosophy of how a President ought to act during wartime, which is to set the strategy, lay out the goals, and empower the military people, both civilian and uniform, to make the decisions necessary to achieve the objective. And they will make those recommendations about troop levels and what is necessary to—go ahead—you've got a followup? This is part of the holiday spirit, to give you a followup. [Laughter]

Possible Expansion of Coalition in Iraq

Q. [Inaudible]—opportunity to get more foreign troops involved?

The President. Well, listen, we're constantly working to get foreign countries involved, but I want to remind you we've got over 60 nations involved now. When you hear me talk about "our" efforts, I'm talking about the efforts of a lot of countries. We've got a large coalition involved, and of course we will accept the willingness of nations to put troops on the ground. We're continuing to work, whether it be troops on the ground or construction contracts or loans. We're constantly reaching out to more nations to get them involved in the process.

And after all, there is a reason why nations should be involved in the process. A secure and free Iraq is in their national interest. A free country, a peaceful country in the heart of the Middle East is in the interest of all nations. This is a transforming event. The emergence of a peaceful Iraq will transform the region in a positive way that will make

it more likely that the world is peaceful. And that we're constantly talking about that message and encouraging people to participate.

Gregory [David Gregory, NBC News].

President's Greeting to Saddam Hussein

Q. Mr. President, good morning. When Saddam emerged from his hole on Saturday, he told a U.S. soldier that he was willing to negotiate. Might there be room for negotiation, perhaps in exchange for a public statement to the Iraqi people that may serve your interest? And secondly, this soldier also said to Saddam, reportedly, that President Bush sends his greetings. You say this is not personal, but you've also pointed out this was a man who tried to murder your father. What is your greeting to him?

The President. Good riddance. The world is better off without you, Mr. Saddam Hussein. I find it very interesting that when the heat got on, you dug yourself a hole, and you crawled in it. And our brave troops, combined with good intelligence, found you. And you'll be brought to justice, something you did not afford the people you brutalized in your own country.

And what was the first part of the question?

Possible Negotiations With Saddam Hussein

Q. I know you'd scoffed at the idea of negotiation. What I'm asking you—

The President. Oh, yes, yes. How do you know I scoffed at it? Laughing does not mean scoffing, but—[laughter]—

Q. Oh, I know, I'm just saying—

Q. There were others who were scoffing. [Laughter]

The President. Okay.

Q. If you were to do something that you might view as constructive, like making a public statement, a video statement?

The President. David, it's just way too early to tell. First of all, I don't trust Saddam Hussein. I don't believe he'll tell the truth. He didn't tell the truth for over a decade. I just can't believe he's going to change his ways just because he happens to be captured. And so I don't think we ought to trust his word.

I think what needs to happen is, he needs to be brought to justice, and the Iraqi citizens need to be very much involved in the development of a system that brings him to justice. And there needs to be a public trial, and all the atrocities need to come out, and justice needs to be delivered. And I'm confident it will be done in a fair way.

Terry [Terry Moran, ABC News].

France and Germany

Q. Mr. President, do you believe that the capture of Saddam Hussein will bridge some of the differences, the bitter differences that have arisen in the world over Iraq? Or do you believe that the Iraq war marks a dividing line, perhaps a long-term dividing line, between those countries which fought to topple Saddam Hussein and those which did not?

The President. Interesting question. I think that—well, first of all, as I want to repeat, there's over 60 nations involved in the reconstruction of Iraq now. So there's a— a lot of people are participating, and we're out working to encourage others to participate.

You're talking—what you're talking about is France and Germany, if the truth be known, if I might clarify your question to me. Look, France and Germany—I have reached out to them. They've reached out to us. It's in our national interests we work together. A whole and united and peaceful Europe is in this country's interest, and we look forward to working with them on a wide range of issues, whether it be intelligence sharing or in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. I want to remind you, Germany has committed troops to Afghanistan. It's in this country's interest that Afghanistan emerge as a peaceful country. Germany is contributing to that effort. There's a lot of areas where we do work together.

We had a disagreement on this issue about Saddam Hussein and his threat. I obviously felt like September the 11th changed the equation to the point where we needed to deal with emerging threats and deal with them in a way that would make America more secure. And they didn't see that; they didn't agree with that point of view. I can understand that. And we are now reaching out to them, by the way—Jim Baker, as you

know, will be going to both those two countries tomorrow, I think it is, to encourage them to work with us on debt relief, all aimed at encouraging the development of a free and peaceful Iraq.

So, no, I don't agree that this is a dividing line. I think this is a disagreement on this particular issue. And I know that we can work together on a variety of other issues, and I'll cite one example, Iran. I was most pleased that the French and Germans as well as the Brits delivered a very strong message to the Iranian Government about the development of a nuclear weapon. It was a message that we agree with, and that is: Don't do so; otherwise there will be international consequences at the United Nations. And it was a very important message to be delivered. We agreed on that. And working together, it made it easier for us to send that message.

John [John Roberts, CBS News]. Working my way across here.

President's Course of Action/2004 Elections

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. The capture of Saddam Hussein is something that has been universally applauded. But there still remain a lot of lingering questions about the postwar phase of Iraq. This administration has stated that it would like to see an interim Iraqi Government stood up by next June, the ability to be able to begin to draw down troops if that's possible. Even a political novice would have to say, well, there appears to be some political component to all this, some way of making real progress ahead of the November elections.

The President. Yes, well, people can read whatever they want to read into it. My job is to keep America secure. That's my job. I've got a solemn duty to do everything I can to protect the American people. I will never forget the lessons of September the 11th, 2001. Terrorists attacked us. They killed thousands of our fellow citizens. And it could happen again, and therefore, I will deal with threats, threats that are emerging and real.

We gave Saddam Hussein plenty of time to heed the demands of the world, and he chose defiance. He did. He said, "Forget it. I don't care what the United Nations has said

over a decade. I don't care about all the resolutions passed." He chose defiance. We acted. And I acted because I—I repeat—I have a duty to protect this country. And I will continue to protect the country, so long as I'm the President of the United States.

A free and peaceful Iraq is part of protecting America, because, I told you before, and I truly believe this, this will be a transforming event in a part of the world where hatred and violence are bred, a part of a world that breeds resentment.

And you know, look, we're going into an election; there's going to be plenty of time for politics. And people can debate all they want. I'm going to do my job. That's what I'm going to do. I'm going to do my job to make this country safer, and I believe we're making good progress toward that objective.

Angle [Jim Angle, FOX News].

2004 Elections/President's Strategy

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Until recently, a growing number of Americans and a couple of Presidential candidates were saying it might be time to think about getting out of Iraq. I know you said that you intend to stay the course, but I wonder what your view is of such sentiments, how concerned you are about that view among the public, and whether or not you think Saddam's capture should change people's thinking?

The President. You know, I think Saddam's capture should make it clear to the people of Iraq, most importantly, that he's through, that people can no longer—no longer have to hold back their sentiments and their feelings toward living in a free society because he might reemerge. That's the most important thing about this capture, is that he can no longer provide any excuse for some who were afraid to act.

And I can understand why people would be afraid to act in Iraq, afraid that Saddam might come back. After all, he's a torturer and a killer. I met with a doctor today. The guy took me aside and he said, "I want to thank you. My dad was murdered by Saddam Hussein." A lot of people share that sentiment, by the way, because it's happened to them. And you can understand why people feared him. After all, he stayed in power by fear, by ruling through fear.

And you know, Jim, I will make the decisions based upon what I think is right to achieve the objectives I've outlined, the objectives I outlined prior to freeing Iraq from Saddam Hussein, and that is to make this country more secure and the world more free.

And I'm confident people aren't going to agree with every decision I make. I understand that, and I don't expect people to agree with every decision I make. But regardless of whether they do or not, I'm going to continue making the decisions in the way that I think is best for the country. And there will be ample time to have the debate about whether or not it's the right strategy or not. I look forward to the debate. I look forward to making my case to the American people about why America is more secure today based upon the decisions that I've made.

As I said, there's ample time for politics. I know you all want to jump the gun. It makes exciting news. It makes the stories more interesting and more vital from your perspective. Let me just—so that we can get this straight early in the process, I take my job seriously. I will do my job, and I look forward to the political debate later on. So I'm confident during the numerous press conferences I'll be having next year, just like I had this year, that you'll be asking me questions about this political statement or that political statement. And my answer is going to be the same until I'm ready to engage, and that is—let me just tell you what the strategy is of this administration—forget politics—the strategy that I've outlined in order to do my solemn duty, and my duty is not only to keep the country more secure but more prosperous and a better country as well.

Dana [Dana Milbank, Washington Post].

Federal Deficit

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. The dollar has fallen quite sharply. Wall Street is increasingly worried about the deficit—sorry—Wall Street is increasingly worried about the deficit. Will you have a specific plan for reducing the deficit, or will economic growth alone take care of the problem?

The President. Yes. No, I appreciate that question. Josh Bolten laid out a plan that will shrink the deficit in half in a 5-year period,

and that's based upon reasonable growth assumptions. And it's a plan that depends upon Congress to continue to hold the line on spending.

We have a deficit because of, one, a recession, two, a war. I want to remind you all that in order to fight and win the war, it requires a expenditure of money that is commiserate with keeping a promise to our troops to make sure that they're well-paid, well-trained, well-equipped. And so we've exceeded—we've spent a lot on defense budgets in order to win the war. We've also spent a lot of money to secure our homeland.

And then of course, there was the tax relief, a stimulus package which was necessary to make sure that we had ample revenues coming into the Treasury in the first place. See, without the tax relief package, there would have been a deficit, but there wouldn't have been the commiserate—not “commiserate”—the kick to our economy that occurred as a result of the tax relief. And the tax relief is working.

When the Senate finishes its work on the appropriations bill, we will have held discretionary spending to 4 percent, and that's what we agreed to with the Congress during the budget negotiations.

I want to remind you of a fact that I think you'll find interesting—or maybe you won't find interesting, but I find it interesting—that non-military, non-homeland-security discretionary spending was at 15 percent—increase from year to year was at 15 percent prior to our arrival; then it was at 6 percent, 5 percent, and 3 percent. So we're working with Congress to hold the line on spending. And we do have a plan to cut the deficit in half.

Sanger [David Sanger, New York Times].

Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction/North Korea

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, it's been 9 months now, and still there is relatively little evidence of WMD in Iraq. In retrospect, if you think back over the year, would you have been better to make more of your—of the argument that you've made in recent times, that democratization in the Middle East was the reason to go to war, rather than WMD?

And since the CIA has been telling you that North Korea does have two or more weapons, what lesson should Kim Chong-il draw from the capture of Saddam Hussein?

The President. Very deft at weaving in two questions there. Here's what I took away from September the 11th, 2001, that any time a President sees a gathering threat to the United States, we must deal with it. We can't pick or choose like we used to, could in the past. In the old days, oceans protected us from harm's way, and a President could stand back and say, “Well, maybe this gathering threat is an issue. Maybe it's not.” After September the 11th, that complacency, I guess may be the right word, no longer is relevant. And therefore, I began to assess threats.

And the threat of Saddam Hussein was a unique threat in this sense: The world recognized he was a threat for 12 years and 17 resolutions, I think it is—I believe it was 17 resolutions—for the resolution counter, give me a hand here—17? Seventeen resolutions. And he ignored them. He just treated the U.N. as an empty debating society, as if their resolutions meant nothing. This is a person who has used chemical weapons before, which indicated to me he was a threat. He invaded his neighbors before. This is a person who was defiant. He's a deceiver, and he was a murderer in his own country. He was a threat.

And so I went to the United Nations, as you recall, September the 12th, 2002, and said to the United Nations, “Let's work together to disarm this man. You recognized he had arms. We recognize he's got arms. Let's disarm him.” And 1441 came about. It's when the world spoke in—through the United Nations Security Council with one voice and in a unanimous voice said, “Disarm, or there will be serious consequences.” In other words, they agreed that Saddam was a threat, and so we moved to disarm him. In other words, there were serious consequences because he was defiant.

Since then, David Kay has reported back that he had weapons programs that would have put him in material breach of 1441. What that means, of course, is that had David Kay been the lead inspector and had done the work that he did prior to our removal

of Saddam, he would have reported back to the U.N. Security Council that Saddam was, in fact, in breach of the Council resolutions that were passed.

Secondly, North Korea—one of the things, David, I think you've seen about our foreign policy is that I'm reluctant to use military power. It's the last choice. It's not our first choice. And in Iraq, there was a lot of diplomacy that took place before there was any military action. There was diplomacy prior to my arrival, diplomacy during my time here, and we tried all means and methodologies to achieve the objective, which was a more secure America, by using diplomatic means and persuasion.

In North Korea, we're now in the process of using diplomatic means and persuasion to convince Kim Chong-il to get rid of his nuclear weapons program. And that's changed by altering the dynamics between the United States and North Korea this way, by inviting other parties to be stakeholders in the process. And that's been successful thus far, of convincing others that they have a stake in the process.

This started in Crawford with Jiang Zemin, where we held a joint press conference, and he stepped out and said that we share a common goal, and that is a nuclear-weapons-free Peninsula—and as you know full well, that the relationship has evolved beyond just a statement, where we're now coparticipants in the process of convincing Kim Chong-il to change his ways. And that's exactly where we are in the process. And I'm pleased with the progress we're making, and I hope, of course, he listens.

Suzanne [Suzanne Malveaux, Cable News Network].

Iraqi Reconstruction Contracts

Q. Mr. President, you have justified your policy in awarding prime Iraq contracts to members of the Coalition Authority because of their sacrifice with the war in Iraq. At the same time, your administration has indicated some room for negotiation. Your critics have called this retaliation and even blackmail. How do you respond to that, and how is this policy helpful in generating international support?

The President. There are over 60 nations involved in Iraq. Let's make sure everybody—let's all start from the same basis, if you don't mind. So there is international support. When you say there's over 60 nations involved in Iraq, that means that there's international support in Iraq. Again, I think you're talking about one or two countries, if I'm not mistaken. And we're reaching out to them, and we want them to participate. But the idea of spending taxpayers' money on contracts to firms that did not participate in the initial thrust is just something I wasn't going to do. And you know what? The American taxpayers understand that. They understand that clearly. That's not to say there's not other ways to participate, and we look forward to including them in the process.

Stretch [Bill Sammon, Washington Times], Big Stretch. I'm sorry. [Laughter]

Howard Dean

Q. I know you said there will be a time for politics. But you've also said you wanted to change the tone in Washington. Howard Dean recently seemed to muse aloud whether you had advance knowledge of 9/11. Do you agree or disagree with the RNC that this kind of rhetoric borders on political hate speech?

The President. There's time for politics. And, you know—there's time for politics, and I—it's an absurd insinuation.

Immigration Policy

Q. In that case, sir, can I follow up on something unrelated? [Laughter] Tom Ridge recently seemed to discuss something you had talked about pre-9/11, and that is finding a way to legalize some of the illegal immigrants in this country. Could you clarify your policy, what it is, short of blanket amnesty?

The President. Yes. Well, first of all, I have constantly said that we need to have an immigration policy that helps match any willing employer with any willing employee. It makes sense that that policy go forward. And we're in the process of working that through now so I can make a recommendation to the Congress.

Let me also clarify something. This administration is firmly against blanket amnesty.

Let's see here. Judy [Judy Keen, USA Today].

Impact of Saddam Hussein's Capture on Situation in Iraq/War on Terror

Q. Mr. President, do you have a sense yet of how involved Saddam Hussein was in planning and directing attacks on coalition troops? Should the American people expect that those attacks will now decrease, or should they be prepared that they might, in the short term, get worse?

The President. To answer your question, we're—the Defense Department will try to learn more from Saddam Hussein as time goes on. And secondly, I believe there will be more violence, because I believe there's holdovers of Saddam that are frustrated, and I believe there are foreign terrorists that cannot stand the thought of a free Iraq emerging in the Middle East. This is a—a free Iraq will be a defeat for those who believe in violence and murder and mayhem. And they will try to resist us there.

And that's—I do believe that there are going to be some people who are persuaded that since Saddam Hussein has been captured, that he will never return, and therefore, they need to be a part of the emergence of a free Iraq and a free society and that there—and it's going to be very important for the Iraqi authorities to reach out to those people and talk about a system that guarantees minority rights and a system which says that for some the future is bright.

And I think when people begin to realize that, when people begin—that were—I would call them fence-sitters—when people begin to realize that the Saddam regime is gone forever and that the new society that will emerge will be a fair society, it will protect people, and protect people from the—protect them based upon their own religious views, for example, guarantee them rights—that's what I mean by “protect”—that it's more likely people will begin to sign on to the future of Iraq. And that's positive. It's a very hopeful thing.

But there will be terrorists, and they want to fight us. Remember this is—Iraq is a battle in the war on terror. The war on terror is being fought on many fronts, and some of them obviously more visible than others. Ob-

viously, the Afghanistan front was a visible front. Iraq is a visible front. The Philippines, for example, is a front in the war on terror against Abu Sayyaf. And we've had fairly stealthy operations there to bring the leadership of Abu Sayyaf to justice.

The war on terror encompasses more than just military action, of course, or the use of special force strike teams. Cutting off money is an important part in the war on terror. And so, Judy, it's very important for people to put this—Iraq in a broader context about a war that will continue on.

The reason I bring that up is that these—the enemy, the terrorists, the killers may continue to try to strike in Iraq. They think they may be able to defeat us there. Yesterday was a clear signal to them that they won't be able to.

The other thing that's happening in Iraq that's positive, and I think this—some of you, your papers and broadcasts have picked this up—is that the intelligence on the ground is getting better. It's getting richer. There's—what they call actionable intelligence, to which our military's responding on a quick basis, is improving. And that's a very important development because, as you notice, when there's a hole in the ground and a person is able to crawl into it in a country the size of California, it means we're on a scavenger hunt for terror. And the best way to find these terrorists who hide in holes is to get people coming forth to describe the location of the hole, is to give clues and data.

And we're on it. Our military is responding, and our intelligence services are doing very good work. And it's just a long process that requires patience and perseverance. And yesterday's arrest of this tyrant and killer was a good example of persistence and fine tuning intelligence and gathering information and the hard work necessary to find people who are willing to hide in holes.

Other Stretch [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News].

Tax Cuts/Monetary Policy

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. At the outset you said that you will pursue next year, the election year, a progrowth agenda. Up until now, “progrowth” in this administration has largely been synonymous with tax cuts. Can

you rule out the possibility of further tax cut proposals next year?

The President. You know, Stretch, it's a trick question. [Laughter] It's not very generous of you during the holiday season. [Laughter]

First of all, I'm pleased with the economic growth that we've seen. I believe the economy is strong. I believe it's getting stronger. I'm pleased with the productivity numbers. I appreciate the fact that durable—orders for durable goods are up. It looks like the manufacturing sector is strengthening.

And what I've been referring to, in terms of progrowth, are an energy bill, good tort reform coming out of the Congress. I thought we had a chance to get some this year. It got stuck, unfortunately, in the Senate. In my judgment, it was a mistake. It was a mistake not to let class-action lawsuit reform go forward. It was a mistake not to get asbestos reform, a mistake not to get medical liability reform. All three of those measures, in my judgment, obviously, are justifiable reforms at the Federal level which would have made a difference in terms of a progrowth environment. We need more regulatory relief. We certainly need to send a signal to the capital markets that we're going to maintain spending discipline. Dana talked about the deficit. He also mentioned the strong dollar.

And by the way, I didn't answer that part of your question. I'll get back there right now. Part of the economic policy of this administration is a strong dollar policy. We fully expect markets to set the dollar. But we have a strong dollar policy, which is, in our judgment, good for the economic vitality of this country. And so we'll see, is the answer to your question.

Yes, Ed [Ed Chen, Los Angeles Times].

Trial of Saddam Hussein

Q. Mr. President, you said earlier this morning that in a trial, that all of Saddam's atrocities be brought up. He was in power more than 30 years—probably would make for a long rap sheet. Do you believe——

The President. Well, Ed, you're not supposed to prejudge.

Q. I'm just counting the years.

The President. Okay, good.

Q. Do you believe that the invasion of Kuwait in 1990 should be included, as well as his assassination attempt against former President Bush?

The President. Ed, that will all be decided by the lawyers. And I will instruct this Government to make sure the system includes the Iraqi citizens and make sure the process stands in—withstands international scrutiny. But we'll let the lawyers handle all that, and as you know, I'm not a lawyer. And I delegate, and I'm going to delegate this to the legal community, which will be reviewing all this matter.

Tamara [Tamara Lipper, Newsweek].

Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction

Q. Thank you, sir. Given your skepticism about Saddam Hussein's ability to tell the truth, do you think his interrogation might help resolve any lingering questions about what he did with his weapons of mass destruction and his ties to terrorist groups?

The President. I don't know. I would think not. I mean, he's a deceiver. He's a liar. He's a torturer. He's a murderer. I can't imagine why he would change his attitude, since he'll be treated humanely by the U.S. coalition—U.S. troops. And you know, I would be very skeptical of anything he said, one way or the other, I might add. You just don't know. He's a—he's just—he is what he is. He's a person that was willing to destroy his country and to kill a lot of his fellow citizens. He's a person who used weapons of mass destruction against citizens in his own country. And so it's—he is the kind of person that is untrustworthy, and I'd be very cautious about relying upon his word in any way, shape, or form.

Yes.

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Yes, Bob [Bob Deans, Cox Newspapers].

The Presidency/Conversation With Former President Bush

Q. ——when you asked the American people for their support 3 years ago, there was no way anyone could have imagined the nature of the job you would have before you. If you had known then what you know now,

sir, would you have wanted the job? Would you have had any hesitation——

The President. That's an interesting question.

Q. ——about asking the American people for it? Now, I have to ask you since we're here, sir, have you chatted with your dad since Saddam was captured?

The President. He called me—let me answer your first question. I absolutely would have wanted the job. I have come to realize this job is a magnificent job because you have a chance to use the position of the United States of America to achieve peace and freedom. And that is a rare opportunity for any person. I put together a fantastic administration to help me with this task. I feel very comfortable in the job because I've got great advice and advisers to whom I—get good advice from great advisers to whom I listen. I am comfortable delegating the awesome responsibilities of, in this administration's case, war two times to incredibly capable and brave people.

At home, this job affords the opportunity to capture what I call the American spirit and to call people to serve in their communities and their neighborhoods and to help people who hurt. It's a fantastic opportunity to try to lift up this country so everybody can realize its full potential. I absolutely would seek the office again, and I intend to do so in '04, by the way. *[Laughter]*

I talked to my Dad. He called me Sunday morning. I got the call from Donald Rumsfeld Saturday afternoon and made the decision there, until I was more certain about the facts, that I would talk to very few people. I talked to Condi and asked her to call Andy, and I talked to Vice President Cheney. Because what I didn't want to have happen is that there would be this rush of enthusiasm and hope and then all of a sudden it would turn out not to be the person that we would hope it would be. So I didn't talk to my family. I told Laura, of course, and pretty much went to bed early Saturday night.

And Condi woke me at 5:15 in the morning, which was okay this time. *[Laughter]* Just don't do it again. *[Laughter]* But she said that Jerry Bremer had just called her and they were prepared to say this was Saddam Hussein, in which case we got dressed and

hustled over to the Oval Office to start making calls. One of the calls I did receive was from my dad, and it was a very brief conversation. He just said, "Congratulations. It's a great day for the country." And I said, "It's a greater day for the Iraqi people."

And that's what I believe. I believe that yesterday was a day—or Saturday, when we captured Saddam, it was a day where America is more secure as a result of his capture. But more importantly, Saturday was a great day for the people who have suffered under this tyrant.

He is—I believe, firmly believe—and you've heard me say this a lot, and I say it a lot because I truly believe it—that freedom is the Almighty God's gift to every person, every man and woman who lives in this world. That's what I believe. And the arrest of Saddam Hussein changed the equation in Iraq. Justice was being delivered to a man who defied that gift from the Almighty to the people of Iraq. And justice will be delivered to him in a way that is transparent and for the world to see. And so I told my dad, I said, "It's a great day for America, but it's a better day for the people of this country," and that's why.

Thank you all for coming. I'll see you Thursday, coats and ties. *[Laughter]* This year, Gregory, don't take any silverware. *[Laughter]*

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:15 a.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Rend Rahim Francke, head of Iraq's Interest Section in the U.S.; Prime Minister Paul Martin of Canada; James A. Baker III, the President's personal envoy on Iraqi debt resolution; Joshua Bolten, Director, Office of Management and Budget; David Kay, CIA Special Advisor for Strategy Regarding Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs; Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea; former President Jiang Zemin of China; National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice; Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff Andrew H. Card, Jr.; and L. Paul Bremer III, Presidential Envoy to Iraq. A reporter referred to Democratic Presidential candidate Howard Dean.

Statement on Senator John Breaux's Decision Not To Seek Reelection

December 15, 2003

John Breaux is a distinguished public servant. His tenure in the Senate has been marked by bipartisan statesmanship, results for the people of Louisiana, and dedicated service for America.

During more than 30 years in the Congress, John Breaux has put party politics aside to get things done for the American people. His leadership in getting the 2001 tax cut passed helped spur economic growth and job creation, and his vision and tenacity on Medicare reform have now helped provide senior citizens with long-awaited prescription drug benefits and more choices in health care. He also has been a leader in the effort to pass comprehensive energy legislation, among many other legislative achievements.

It is with deep respect that Laura and I extend our gratitude and best wishes to John, his wife, Lois, and their children.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Iraq

December 15, 2003

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (Public Law 107-243), the Authorization for the Use of Force Against Iraq Resolution (Public Law 102-1), and in order to keep the Congress fully informed, I am providing a report prepared by my Administration. This report includes matters relating to post-liberation Iraq under section 7 of the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-338).

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate.

Remarks on Signing the American Dream Downpayment Act

December 16, 2003

Thank you all. Thank you for coming. Thanks for the warm welcome. It's great to be back at the Department of Housing and Urban Development. This is not my first time here, nor will it be my last.

I am here today because we are taking action to bring many thousands of Americans closer to owning a home. Our Government is supporting homeownership because it is good for America; it is good for our families; it is good for our economy. One of the biggest hurdles to homeownership is getting money for a downpayment. This administration has recognized that, and so today I'm honored to be here to sign a law that will help many low-income buyers to overcome that hurdle and to achieve an important part of the American Dream.

I appreciate Alphonso Jackson agreeing to step up and become the Acting Secretary of the Housing and Urban Development. I look forward to his Senate confirmation, a hasty confirmation.

I also want to thank Mel Martinez for doing such a fine job as the Secretary of this important organization. Mel brought integrity and honor to the office. He did a fine job on behalf of all Americans. And we honor you, Mel.

I want to thank all the hard-working officers and employees of HUD. I appreciate your focus and your dedication, your willingness to work on behalf of a better America.

I thank very much Members of the Congress who have taken time to come and join us for this important bill signing. Senator Wayne Allard from Colorado is with us. Senator Allard, thank you for your work on the floor of the Senate. Chairman of the Financial Services Committee Mike Oxley is with us. Congressman, thank you for coming. Congressman Jim Leach from Iowa is with us today. Congressman, thank you for being here. Congresswoman Katherine Harris, who had a lot to do with this bill getting passed, is here with us. Katherine, thank you for coming. Delegate Madeleine Bordallo of Guam is with us today. I'm honored you are

here. Thank you for coming, Madeleine. I appreciate you coming.

I too want to pay homage to a man I call Little Woody; that would be Rob Woodson. He worked hard in the development of this policy. I think it is safe to say that he was the—he developed the concept for this policy, a concept embraced by my administration. I'm appreciative that Michelle is here. I also want to thank Dad for coming, Bob Woodson, who is a social entrepreneur, a person who cares deeply about every American having the right and a chance to own a home. Thank the Woodson family. God bless you all.

I want to thank the representatives of consumer and housing groups that worked hard on this piece of legislation. I want to thank leaders of the national community organizations that are with us, members of the real estate industry.

This administration will constantly strive to promote an ownership society in America. We want more people owning their own home. It is in our national interest that more people own their own home. After all, if you own your own home, you have a vital stake in the future of our country.

And this is a good time for the American homeowner. Today we received a report that showed that new home construction last month reached its highest level in nearly 20 years. The reason that is so is because there is renewed confidence in our economy. Low interest rates help. They have made owning a home more affordable for those who refinance and for those who buy a home for the first time. Rising home values have added more than \$2½ trillion to the assets of the American families since the start of 2001.

The rate of homeownership in America now stands at a record high of 68.4 percent. Yet there is room for improvement. The rate of homeownership amongst minorities is below 50 percent. And that's not right, and this country needs to do something about it. We need to close the minority homeownership gap in America so more citizens get the satisfaction and mobility that comes from owning your own home, from owning a piece of the future of America.

Last year I set a goal to add 5.5 million new minority homeowners in America by the

end of the decade. That is an attainable goal; that is an essential goal. And we're making progress toward that goal. In the past 18 months, more than 1 million minority families have become homeowners. And there's more that we can do to achieve the goal. The law I sign today will help us build on this progress in a very practical way.

Many people are able to afford a monthly mortgage payment but are unable to make the downpayment, and so this legislation will authorize \$200 million per year in downpayment assistance to at least 40,000 low-income families. These funds will help American families achieve their goals and, at the same time, strengthen our communities.

And there's more to do as well. We'll continue to pursue a broad agenda to help people own a home. There are three steps I want to describe to you right quickly about what we intend to do.

First, those who apply for mortgages should be made aware of all the costs and warned about predatory lenders who take advantage of inexperienced buyers. So we've doubled the funds for housing counseling services, including those run by faith-based and community groups. We understand that buying a home for the first time is complicated, and we want to simplify the process. We want to help people understand the pros and cons of buying a home. We want people to be fully aware of what it means to buy a home and what it takes. And we want people as best protected as possible from those shysters who would take advantage of first-time buyers.

Second, we need to make the homebuying process more affordable. Some of the biggest upfront costs in a home purchase are the closing costs. Sometimes they catch you by surprise. *[Laughter]* Many homebuyers do not have the time to shop around looking for a better deal on closing costs. You're kind of stuck with what you're presented with. And so they end up paying more than they should. So we've proposed new rules to make it easier for buyers to shop around and to compare prices on closing costs, so they can get the best deal and the best service possible.

And thirdly, we want to make buying a home simpler. Many first-time buyers look

at the paperwork from a loan application and, frankly, get a little nervous about all the fine print. Those forms can be intimidating to the first-time homebuyer. They can be intimidating to the second- or third-time homebuyer too. *[Laughter]* So this administration has proposed new rules to simplify the forms homebuyers and homeowners fill out when they apply for a loan or close on a mortgage.

We understand that buying a home is a big step, and so these three recommendations we're making, these three changes in the rules, will make that step easier, will enable people to make the step to buying a home—they'll be able to do so with more confidence. These are practical ways that we are working to expand homeownership across the country.

The dream of homeownership should be attainable for every hard-working American. That's what we want. And this act of Congress I'm going to sign, the regulations that I hope are finalized soon will help thousands of families fulfill the dream.

And so now it is my honor, right here at this important Department, the Department responsible for encouraging homeownership in America, to sign the American Dream Downpayment Act.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:57 p.m. at the Department of Housing and Urban Development. In his remarks, he referred to the late Robert Woodson, Jr., former Chief of Staff, Department of Housing and Urban Development, and his widow, Michelle; and Robert Woodson, Sr., founder and president, National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise. S. 811, approved December 16, was assigned Public Law No. 108-186. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Completion of the Kabul-Kandahar Highway

December 16, 2003

More than a year ago, Afghan President Hamid Karzai broke ground on the reconstruction of a highway that—when com-

pleted—will run through the heart of Afghanistan, helping to unify that great nation. The United States and Japan pledged to provide financing and personnel to the project, and we further pledged that the first leg—the 300 miles from the capital of Kabul to the important city of Kandahar—would be completed by the end of this year.

Today we have met that pledge, as the first phase of paving the Kabul-Kandahar leg of the highway is completed under budget and ahead of schedule. This new road reduces travel time between Kabul to Kandahar to 5 hours. It will promote political unity between Afghanistan's provinces, facilitate commerce by making it easier to bring products to market, and provide the Afghan people with greater access to health care and educational opportunities.

I am grateful for the enormous efforts of engineers and laborers from many countries who worked tirelessly and often in the face of hardship and danger to finish this leg of the road on time. This accomplishment underscores the firm commitment of the United States and coalition to support the Afghan people as they build a democratic, stable, and thriving Afghanistan.

Joint Statement Agreed to by President Bush, President Chirac, and Chancellor Schroeder

December 16, 2003

Debt reduction is critical if the Iraqi people are to have any chance to build a free and prosperous Iraq. Therefore, France, Germany, and the United States agree that there should be substantial debt reduction for Iraq in the Paris Club in 2004, and will work closely with each other and with other countries to achieve this objective. The exact percentage of debt reduction that would constitute "substantial" debt reduction is subject to future agreement between the parties.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

**Memorandum on Determination
To Authorize Drawdown for
Afghanistan**

December 16, 2003

Presidential Determination No. 2004-15

*Memorandum for the Secretary of State, the
Secretary of Defense*

*Subject: Determination to Authorize
Drawdown for Afghanistan*

Consistent with the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, including section 202 and other relevant provisions of the Afghanistan Freedom Support Act (Public Law 107-327) and section 506 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, 22 U.S.C. 2318, I hereby direct the drawdown of up to \$135 million of defense articles, defense services, and military education and training from the Department of Defense for the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan.

The Secretary of State is authorized and directed to report this determination to the Congress and to arrange for its publication in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

**Remarks on the 100th Anniversary of
the Wright Brothers' First Flight at
Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina**

December 17, 2003

Thank you all very much. Rain will never dampen our spirits. I'm honored to be here, and I'm honored to be in the great State of North Carolina.

Madam Secretary, thank you for your fine leadership and your friendship. Secretary Mineta, thank you for your great leadership, as well. I'm proud that you're serving in my Cabinet. Mr. Governor, I appreciate your kind comments. I appreciate the values you hold dear to your heart, and I thank you for leading this great State.

To John Travolta, we shall call him "Moon Man" from now on. I appreciate your friendship. I appreciate your love of flight. Thank you for being such a fine entertainer for millions of Americans, but most importantly,

thanks for being a great American. I'm proud you're here.

I appreciate the fact that the Secretary of the Navy, Gordon England, is here. The Secretary of the Air Force, James Roche, is traveling with me today. I appreciate Sean O'Keefe, who is the Administrator of NASA, who has come today. I thank all members of my administration who have joined us. I hope you were smart enough to have brought an umbrella. *[Laughter]*

I know we've got Members of the Congress who are here. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist from Tennessee is with us today. Senator Frist, thank you for coming. Senator Elizabeth Dole from the great State of North Carolina is with us. Senator Dole, thank you for being here. All Members of Congress from North Carolina and from other States, thank you for being here. I know we've got mayors and State officials.

I appreciate so very much American heroes who are here, well-known and not so well-known heroes. Let me name four of the well-known heroes who are here: Neil Armstrong; Buzz Aldrin; John Glenn; one of the great fighter pilots ever, Chuck Yeager, is with us today. We're honored to be in your presence. Thank you for being pioneers.

I'm also pleased that we're joined by Stephen Wright and Amanda Wright Lane, who both bear one of the great American names.

Powered flight has advanced in ways that could not have been imagined on December 17, 1903. And in the future, flight will advance in ways that none of us can imagine as we stand here today. Yet always, for as long as there is human flight, we will honor the achievement of a cold morning on the Outer Banks of North Carolina by two young brothers named Orville and Wilbur Wright.

Orville Wright lived to see the days of barnstorming and military aviation, the jet engine, commercial airlines, and the DC-3. The thrill of his life, however, was surely right here when he felt that first lift of the wing. He flew just 12 seconds and 40 yards, moving so slowly that his older brother ran alongside. And later in the day, with Wilbur at the controls, the machine stayed in the air for 59 seconds and traveled 852 feet. Yet everyone who was here at that hour sensed that a great line had been crossed and the

world might never be the same. A local boy named Johnny Moore was one of the witnesses. He ran down the beach and said, "They done it. They done it. Damned if they ain't flew!"

The anniversary now observed might have fallen a few days earlier, on the 13th. But December the 13th, 1903, was a Sunday, and the brothers had promised their dad they wouldn't attempt to fly on the Sabbath. And on the day they did fly, just like today, the conditions were not ideal. But they went ahead anyway, so they could get home to Dayton, Ohio, for Christmas.

Orville and Wilbur were, in so many ways, ordinary Americans, and hearing of their plans, a lot of folks must have thought those boys should have stayed in the bicycle business. The story is told of a newspaper editor who heard what the Wright brothers had been up to. He said, "Man will never fly, and if he does, he won't be from Dayton." [Laughter]

The United States Patent Office also had its doubts. So many others had submitted plans and models of flying machines that when the brothers sent in theirs, patent officials had a ready response. The office concluded the plans were inadequate and the machine could never function as intended. The New York Times once confidently explained why all attempts at flight were doomed from the start. To build a flying machine, declared one editorial, would require "the combined and continuous efforts of mathematicians and mechanics from 1 million to 10 million years." As it turned out, the feat was performed 8 weeks after the editorial was written. And not only did the machine perform its function, that little wood and canvas aircraft had brought together all the essentials that still give flight to every modern aircraft, from a single-prop plane to Air Force One.

The Wright brothers had some disappointments along the way, and there must have been times when they had to fight their own doubts. They pressed on, believing in the great work they had begun and in their own capacity to see it through. We would not know their names today if these men had been pessimists. And when it was over, they marveled at their own achievement. As

Orville wrote in a letter to a friend, "Isn't it astounding that all these secrets have been preserved for so many years just so we could discover them."

The Wright brothers' invention belongs to the world, but the Wright brothers belong to America. We take special pride in their qualities of discipline and persistence, optimism and imagination—of people like them and a lot of other people throughout our history. So many great inventions arose in this country, and so many of the great inventors came from unlikely backgrounds. The Wright brothers had their storefront bicycle shop. Thomas Edison was a newsboy. Eli Whitney and Henry Ford worked as farm hands. George Washington Carver was born a slave. There is something in the American character that always looks for a better way and is unimpressed when others say it cannot be done. Those traits still define our Nation. We still rely on men and women who overcome the odds and take the big chance with no advantage but their own ingenuity and the opportunities of a free country.

A great American journey that began at Kitty Hawk continues in ways unimaginable to the Wright brothers. One small piece of their Flyer traveled far beyond this field. It was carried by another flying machine, on *Apollo 11*, all the way to the Sea of Tranquility on the Moon. These past 100 years have brought supersonic flights, frequent space travel, the exploration of Mars, and the *Voyager One* spacecraft, which right now is moving at 39,000 miles per hour toward the outer edge of our solar system. By our skill and daring, America has excelled in every area of aviation and space travel. And our national commitment remains firm: By our skill and daring, we will continue to lead the world in flight.

This day, however, is one for recalling an heroic event in the history of our Nation and in the story of mankind. Here at the Wright Brothers National Memorial, we remember one small machine, and we honor the giants who flew it.

May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:37 a.m. at the Wright Brothers National Memorial. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of the Interior

Gale A. Norton; Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta; Governor Michael F. Easley of North Carolina; and actor John Travolta, who served as master of ceremonies.

Proclamation 7745—Wright Brothers Day, 2003

December 17, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

A spirit of exploration and discovery has been a part of the American character since our founding days. Orville and Wilbur Wright exemplified this spirit when they made the dream of human flight a reality on December 17, 1903. On Wright Brothers Day, we honor the vision of these bicycle mechanics from Dayton, Ohio, and celebrate the centennial of manned, powered flight.

One hundred years ago, the Wright brothers changed our world with their 12-second, 120-foot flight in North Carolina. Their achievement inspired other aviation pioneers and marked the beginning of a new era of freedom. Since that first flight, aviation and aerospace technology has advanced at a remarkable pace, allowing us to fly across oceans, break the sound barrier, orbit the Earth, land on the moon, and study our universe in a way our ancestors could not have imagined. Each new generation of engineers and other inventors, following in the Wright Brothers' footsteps, continues to move the technology of flight further.

Today, air transportation touches the lives of people throughout the United States, and helps unite the American people. Air transportation brings families and friends together, delivers aid to those in need, and facilitates industry and commerce.

As we look to the future, we remember the extraordinary accomplishments of the Wright Brothers. Their determination and innovation continue to inspire us as we embark on the second century of flight.

The Congress, by a joint resolution approved December 17, 1963 (77 Stat. 402; 36 U.S.C. 143) as amended, has designated December 17 of each year as "Wright Brothers Day" and has authorized and requested the

President to issue annually a proclamation inviting the people of the United States to observe that day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 17, 2003, as Wright Brothers Day.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this seventeenth day of December, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 22, 2003]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 23.

**Executive Order 13321—
Appointments During National
Emergency**

December 17, 2003

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*), and section 301 of title 3, United States Code, and in order to further respond to the national emergency I declared in Proclamation 7463 of September 14, 2001, I hereby order as follows:

Section 1. Emergency Appointments Authority. The emergency appointments authority at section 603 of title 10, United States Code, is invoked and made available to the Secretary of Defense in accordance with the terms of that statute and of Executive Order 12396 of December 9, 1982.

Sec. 2. Judicial Review. This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, entities, officers, employees or agents, or any person.

Sec. 3. Administration. This order shall be transmitted to the Congress and published in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 17, 2003.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 22, 2003]

NOTE: This Executive order will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 23.

**Letter to Congressional Leaders
Reporting on the Executive Order
Regarding Appointments During
National Emergency**

December 17, 2003

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with section 301 of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1631), I hereby report that I have taken additional steps with respect to the national emergency I declared in Proclamation 7463 of September 14, 2001, by invoking and making available to the Secretary of Defense the emergency appointments authority of section 603 of title 10 of the United States Code, consistent with the terms of that statute and of Executive Order 12396 of December 9, 1982.

I am enclosing a copy of the Executive Order I have issued, which is effective immediately.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate.

**Directive on Critical Infrastructure
Identification, Prioritization, and
Protection**

December 17, 2003

Homeland Security Presidential Directive/
HSPD-7

Subject: Critical Infrastructure
Identification, Prioritization, and Protection

Purpose

(1) This directive establishes a national policy for Federal departments and agencies to identify and prioritize United States critical infrastructure and key resources and to protect them from terrorist attacks.

Background

(2) Terrorists seek to destroy, incapacitate, or exploit critical infrastructure and key resources across the United States to threaten national security, cause mass casualties, weaken our economy, and damage public morale and confidence.

(3) America's open and technologically complex society includes a wide array of critical infrastructure and key resources that are potential terrorist targets. The majority of these are owned and operated by the private sector and State or local governments. These critical infrastructures and key resources are both physical and cyber-based and span all sectors of the economy.

(4) Critical infrastructure and key resources provide the essential services that underpin American society. The Nation possesses numerous key resources, whose exploitation or destruction by terrorists could cause catastrophic health effects or mass casualties comparable to those from the use of a weapon of mass destruction, or could profoundly affect our national prestige and morale. In addition, there is critical infrastructure so vital that its incapacitation, exploitation, or destruction, through terrorist attack, could have a debilitating effect on security and economic well-being.

(5) While it is not possible to protect or eliminate the vulnerability of all critical infrastructure and key resources throughout the country, strategic improvements in security can make it more difficult for attacks to succeed and can lessen the impact of attacks that may occur. In addition to strategic security enhancements, tactical security improvements can be rapidly implemented to deter, mitigate, or neutralize potential attacks.

Definitions

(6) In this directive:

- (a) The term “critical infrastructure” has the meaning given to that term in section 1016(e) of the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001 (42 U.S.C. 5195c(e)).
- (b) The term “key resources” has the meaning given that term in section 2(9) of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101(9)).
- (c) The term “the Department” means the Department of Homeland Security.
- (d) The term “Federal departments and agencies” means those executive departments enumerated in 5 U.S.C. 101, and the Department of Homeland Security; independent establishments as defined by 5 U.S.C. 104(1); Government corporations as defined by 5 U.S.C. 103(1); and the United States Postal Service.
- (e) The terms “State,” and “local government,” when used in a geographical sense, have the same meanings given to those terms in section 2 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101).
- (f) The term “the Secretary” means the Secretary of Homeland Security.
- (g) The term “Sector-Specific Agency” means a Federal department or agency responsible for infrastructure protection activities in a designated critical infrastructure sector or key resources category. Sector-Specific Agencies will conduct their activities under this directive in accordance with guidance provided by the Secretary.
- (h) The terms “protect” and “secure” mean reducing the vulnerability of critical infrastructure or key resources in order to deter, mitigate, or neutralize terrorist attacks.

Policy

(7) It is the policy of the United States to enhance the protection of our Nation’s critical infrastructure and key resources against terrorist acts that could:

- (a) cause catastrophic health effects or mass casualties comparable to those from the use of a weapon of mass destruction;
 - (b) impair Federal departments and agencies’ abilities to perform essential missions, or to ensure the public’s health and safety;
 - (c) undermine State and local government capacities to maintain order and to deliver minimum essential public services;
 - (d) damage the private sector’s capability to ensure the orderly functioning of the economy and delivery of essential services;
 - (e) have a negative effect on the economy through the cascading disruption of other critical infrastructure and key resources; or
 - (f) undermine the public’s morale and confidence in our national economic and political institutions.
- (8) Federal departments and agencies will identify, prioritize, and coordinate the protection of critical infrastructure and key resources in order to prevent, deter, and mitigate the effects of deliberate efforts to destroy, incapacitate, or exploit them. Federal departments and agencies will work with State and local governments and the private sector to accomplish this objective.
- (9) Federal departments and agencies will ensure that homeland security programs do not diminish the overall economic security of the United States.
- (10) Federal departments and agencies will appropriately protect information associated with carrying out this directive, including handling voluntarily provided information and information that would facilitate terrorist targeting of critical infrastructure and key resources consistent with the Homeland Security Act of 2002 and other applicable legal authorities.
- (11) Federal departments and agencies shall implement this directive in a manner consistent with applicable provisions of law, including those protecting the rights of United States persons.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Secretary

(12) In carrying out the functions assigned in the Homeland Security Act of 2002, the Secretary shall be responsible for coordinating the overall national effort to enhance the protection of the critical infrastructure and key resources of the United States. The Secretary shall serve as the principal Federal official to lead, integrate, and coordinate implementation of efforts among Federal departments and agencies, State and local governments, and the private sector to protect critical infrastructure and key resources.

(13) Consistent with this directive, the Secretary will identify, prioritize, and coordinate the protection of critical infrastructure and key resources with an emphasis on critical infrastructure and key resources that could be exploited to cause catastrophic health effects or mass casualties comparable to those from the use of a weapon of mass destruction.

(14) The Secretary will establish uniform policies, approaches, guidelines, and methodologies for integrating Federal infrastructure protection and risk management activities within and across sectors along with metrics and criteria for related programs and activities.

(15) The Secretary shall coordinate protection activities for each of the following critical infrastructure sectors: information technology; telecommunications; chemical; transportation systems, including mass transit, aviation, maritime, ground/surface, and rail and pipeline systems; emergency services; and postal and shipping. The Department shall coordinate with appropriate departments and agencies to ensure the protection of other key resources including dams, government facilities, and commercial facilities. In addition, in its role as overall cross-sector coordinator, the Department shall also evaluate the need for and coordinate the coverage of additional critical infrastructure and key resources categories over time, as appropriate.

(16) The Secretary will continue to maintain an organization to serve as a focal point for the security of cyberspace. The organization will facilitate interactions and collaborations between and among Federal depart-

ments and agencies, State and local governments, the private sector, academia and international organizations. To the extent permitted by law, Federal departments and agencies with cyber expertise, including but not limited to the Departments of Justice, Commerce, the Treasury, Defense, Energy, and State, and the Central Intelligence Agency, will collaborate with and support the organization in accomplishing its mission. The organization's mission includes analysis, warning, information sharing, vulnerability reduction, mitigation, and aiding national recovery efforts for critical infrastructure information systems. The organization will support the Department of Justice and other law enforcement agencies in their continuing missions to investigate and prosecute threats to and attacks against cyberspace, to the extent permitted by law.

(17) The Secretary will work closely with other Federal departments and agencies, State and local governments, and the private sector in accomplishing the objectives of this directive.

Roles and Responsibilities of Sector-Specific Federal Agencies

(18) Recognizing that each infrastructure sector possesses its own unique characteristics and operating models, there are designated Sector-Specific Agencies, including:

- (a) Department of Agriculture—agriculture, food (meat, poultry, egg products);
- (b) Health and Human Services—public health, healthcare, and food (other than meat, poultry, egg products);
- (c) Environmental Protection Agency—drinking water and water treatment systems;
- (d) Department of Energy—energy, including the production refining, storage, and distribution of oil and gas, and electric power except for commercial nuclear power facilities;
- (e) Department of the Treasury—banking and finance;
- (f) Department of the Interior—national monuments and icons; and
- (g) Department of Defense—defense industrial base.

(19) In accordance with guidance provided by the Secretary, Sector-Specific Agencies shall:

- (a) collaborate with all relevant Federal departments and agencies, State and local governments, and the private sector, including with key persons and entities in their infrastructure sector;
- (b) conduct or facilitate vulnerability assessments of the sector; and
- (c) encourage risk management strategies to protect against and mitigate the effects of attacks against critical infrastructure and key resources.

(20) Nothing in this directive alters, or impedes the ability to carry out, the authorities of the Federal departments and agencies to perform their responsibilities under law and consistent with applicable legal authorities and presidential guidance.

(21) Federal departments and agencies shall cooperate with the Department in implementing this directive, consistent with the Homeland Security Act of 2002 and other applicable legal authorities.

Roles and Responsibilities of Other Departments, Agencies, and Offices

(22) In addition to the responsibilities given the Department and Sector-Specific Agencies, there are special functions of various Federal departments and agencies and components of the Executive Office of the President related to critical infrastructure and key resources protection.

- (a) The Department of State, in conjunction with the Department, and the Departments of Justice, Commerce, Defense, the Treasury and other appropriate agencies, will work with foreign countries and international organizations to strengthen the protection of United States critical infrastructure and key resources.
- (b) The Department of Justice, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, will reduce domestic terrorist threats, and investigate and prosecute actual or attempted terrorist attacks on, sabotage of, or disruptions of critical infrastructure and key resources. The Attorney General and the Secretary shall use applicable statutory author-

ity and attendant mechanisms for cooperation and coordination, including but not limited to those established by presidential directive.

- (c) The Department of Commerce, in coordination with the Department, will work with private sector, research, academic, and government organizations to improve technology for cyber systems and promote other critical infrastructure efforts, including using its authority under the Defense Production Act to assure the timely availability of industrial products, materials, and services to meet homeland security requirements.
- (d) A Critical Infrastructure Protection Policy Coordinating Committee will advise the Homeland Security Council on interagency policy related to physical and cyber infrastructure protection. This PCC will be chaired by a Federal officer or employee designated by the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security.
- (e) The Office of Science and Technology Policy, in coordination with the Department, will coordinate interagency research and development to enhance the protection of critical infrastructure and key resources.
- (f) The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) shall oversee the implementation of government-wide policies, principles, standards, and guidelines for Federal government computer security programs. The Director of OMB will ensure the operation of a central Federal information security incident center consistent with the requirements of the Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002.
- (g) Consistent with the E-Government Act of 2002, the Chief Information Officers Council shall be the principal interagency forum for improving agency practices related to the design, acquisition, development, modernization, use, operation, sharing, and performance of information resources of Federal departments and agencies.

- (h) The Department of Transportation and the Department will collaborate on all matters relating to transportation security and transportation infrastructure protection. The Department of Transportation is responsible for operating the national air space system. The Department of Transportation and the Department will collaborate in regulating the transportation of hazardous materials by all modes (including pipelines).

- (i) All Federal departments and agencies shall work with the sectors relevant to their responsibilities to reduce the consequences of catastrophic failures not caused by terrorism.

(23) The heads of all Federal departments and agencies will coordinate and cooperate with the Secretary as appropriate and consistent with their own responsibilities for protecting critical infrastructure and key resources.

(24) All Federal department and agency heads are responsible for the identification, prioritization, assessment, remediation, and protection of their respective internal critical infrastructure and key resources. Consistent with the Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002, agencies will identify and provide information security protections commensurate with the risk and magnitude of the harm resulting from the unauthorized access, use, disclosure, disruption, modification, or destruction of information.

Coordination with the Private Sector

(25) In accordance with applicable laws or regulations, the Department and the Sector-Specific Agencies will collaborate with appropriate private sector entities and continue to encourage the development of information sharing and analysis mechanisms. Additionally, the Department and Sector-Specific Agencies shall collaborate with the private sector and continue to support sector-coordinating mechanisms:

- (a) to identify, prioritize, and coordinate the protection of critical infrastructure and key resources; and
- (b) to facilitate sharing of information about physical and cyber threats, vulnerabilities, incidents, potential

protective measures, and best practices.

National Special Security Events

(26) The Secretary, after consultation with the Homeland Security Council, shall be responsible for designating events as "National Special Security Events" (NSSEs). This directive supersedes language in previous presidential directives regarding the designation of NSSEs that is inconsistent herewith.

Implementation

(27) Consistent with the Homeland Security Act of 2002, the Secretary shall produce a comprehensive, integrated National Plan for Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources Protection to outline national goals, objectives, milestones, and key initiatives within 1 year from the issuance of this directive. The Plan shall include, in addition to other Homeland Security-related elements as the Secretary deems appropriate, the following elements:

- (a) a strategy to identify, prioritize, and coordinate the protection of critical infrastructure and key resources, including how the Department intends to work with Federal departments and agencies, State and local governments, the private sector, and foreign countries and international organizations;
- (b) a summary of activities to be undertaken in order to: define and prioritize, reduce the vulnerability of, and coordinate the protection of critical infrastructure and key resources;
- (c) a summary of initiatives for sharing critical infrastructure and key resources information and for providing critical infrastructure and key resources threat warning data to State and local governments and the private sector; and
- (d) coordination and integration, as appropriate, with other Federal emergency management and preparedness activities including the National Response Plan and applicable national preparedness goals.

(28) The Secretary, consistent with the Homeland Security Act of 2002 and other

applicable legal authorities and presidential guidance, shall establish appropriate systems, mechanisms, and procedures to share homeland security information relevant to threats and vulnerabilities in national critical infrastructure and key resources with other Federal departments and agencies, State and local governments, and the private sector in a timely manner.

(29) The Secretary will continue to work with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and, as appropriate, the Department of Energy in order to ensure the necessary protection of:

- (a) commercial nuclear reactors for generating electric power and non-power nuclear reactors used for research, testing, and training;
- (b) nuclear materials in medical, industrial, and academic settings and facilities that fabricate nuclear fuel; and
- (c) the transportation, storage, and disposal of nuclear materials and waste.

(30) In coordination with the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, the Secretary shall prepare on an annual basis a Federal Research and Development Plan in support of this directive.

(31) The Secretary will collaborate with other appropriate Federal departments and agencies to develop a program, consistent with applicable law, to geospatially map, image, analyze, and sort critical infrastructure and key resources by utilizing commercial satellite and airborne systems, and existing capabilities within other agencies. National technical means should be considered as an option of last resort. The Secretary, with advice from the Director of Central Intelligence, the Secretaries of Defense and the Interior, and the heads of other appropriate Federal departments and agencies, shall develop mechanisms for accomplishing this initiative. The Attorney General shall provide legal advice as necessary.

(32) The Secretary will utilize existing, and develop new, capabilities as needed to model comprehensively the potential implications of terrorist exploitation of vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure and key resources, placing specific focus on densely populated areas. Agencies with relevant modeling capabilities shall cooperate with the Secretary to

develop appropriate mechanisms for accomplishing this initiative.

(33) The Secretary will develop a national indications and warnings architecture for infrastructure protection and capabilities that will facilitate:

- (a) an understanding of baseline infrastructure operations;
- (b) the identification of indicators and precursors to an attack; and
- (c) a surge capacity for detecting and analyzing patterns of potential attacks.

In developing a national indications and warnings architecture, the Department will work with Federal, State, local, and non-governmental entities to develop an integrated view of physical and cyber infrastructure and key resources.

(34) By July 2004, the heads of all Federal departments and agencies shall develop and submit to the Director of the OMB for approval plans for protecting the physical and cyber critical infrastructure and key resources that they own or operate. These plans shall address identification, prioritization, protection, and contingency planning, including the recovery and reconstitution of essential capabilities.

(35) On an annual basis, the Sector-Specific Agencies shall report to the Secretary on their efforts to identify, prioritize, and coordinate the protection of critical infrastructure and key resources in their respective sectors. The report shall be submitted within 1 year from the issuance of this directive and on an annual basis thereafter.

(36) The Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs will lead a national security and emergency preparedness communications policy review, with the heads of the appropriate Federal departments and agencies, related to convergence and next generation architecture. Within 6 months after the issuance of this directive, the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs shall submit for my consideration any recommended changes to such policy.

(37) This directive supersedes Presidential Decision Directive/NSC-63 of May 22, 1998 ("Critical Infrastructure Protection"), and

any Presidential directives issued prior to this directive to the extent of any inconsistency. Moreover, the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs shall jointly submit for my consideration a Presidential directive to make changes in Presidential directives issued prior to this date that conform such directives to this directive.

(38) This directive is intended only to improve the internal management of the executive branch of the Federal Government, and it is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, against the United States, its departments, agencies, or other entities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

George W. Bush

Directive on National Preparedness

December 17, 2003

Homeland Security Presidential Directive/
HSPD-8

Subject: National Preparedness

Purpose

(1) This directive establishes policies to strengthen the preparedness of the United States to prevent and respond to threatened or actual domestic terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies by requiring a national domestic all-hazards preparedness goal, establishing mechanisms for improved delivery of Federal preparedness assistance to State and local governments, and outlining actions to strengthen preparedness capabilities of Federal, State, and local entities.

Definitions

(2) For the purposes of this directive:

- (a) The term “all-hazards preparedness” refers to preparedness for domestic terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies.
- (b) The term “Federal departments and agencies” means those executive departments enumerated in 5 U.S.C. 101, and the Department of Homeland Security; independent establish-

ments as defined by 5 U.S.C. 104(1); Government corporations as defined by 5 U.S.C. 103(1); and the United States Postal Service.

- (c) The term “Federal preparedness assistance” means Federal department and agency grants, cooperative agreements, loans, loan guarantees, training, and/or technical assistance provided to State and local governments and the private sector to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies. Unless noted otherwise, the term “assistance” will refer to Federal assistance programs.
- (d) The term “first responder” refers to those individuals who in the early stages of an incident are responsible for the protection and preservation of life, property, evidence, and the environment, including emergency response providers as defined in section 2 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101), as well as emergency management, public health, clinical care, public works, and other skilled support personnel (such as equipment operators) that provide immediate support services during prevention, response, and recovery operations.
- (e) The terms “major disaster” and “emergency” have the meanings given in section 102 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5122).
- (f) The term “major events” refers to domestic terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies.
- (g) The term “national homeland security preparedness-related exercises” refers to homeland security-related exercises that train and test national decision makers and utilize resources of multiple Federal departments and agencies. Such exercises may involve State and local first responders when appropriate. Such exercises do not include those exercises conducted solely within a single Federal department or agency.

- (h) The term “preparedness” refers to the existence of plans, procedures, policies, training, and equipment necessary at the Federal, State, and local level to maximize the ability to prevent, respond to, and recover from major events. The term “readiness” is used interchangeably with preparedness.
 - (i) The term “prevention” refers to activities undertaken by the first responder community during the early stages of an incident to reduce the likelihood or consequences of threatened or actual terrorist attacks. More general and broader efforts to deter, disrupt, or thwart terrorism are not addressed in this directive.
 - (j) The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Homeland Security.
 - (k) The terms “State,” and “local government,” when used in a geographical sense, have the same meanings given to those terms in section 2 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101).
- departments and agencies and in consultation with State and local governments, shall develop a national domestic all-hazards preparedness goal. Federal departments and agencies will work to achieve this goal by:
- (a) providing for effective, efficient, and timely delivery of Federal preparedness assistance to State and local governments; and
 - (b) supporting efforts to ensure first responders are prepared to respond to major events, especially prevention of and response to threatened terrorist attacks.
- (6) The national preparedness goal will establish measurable readiness priorities and targets that appropriately balance the potential threat and magnitude of terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies with the resources required to prevent, respond to, and recover from them. It will also include readiness metrics and elements that support the national preparedness goal including standards for preparedness assessments and strategies, and a system for assessing the Nation’s overall preparedness to respond to major events, especially those involving acts of terrorism.

Relationship to HSPD-5

(3) This directive is a companion to HSPD-5, which identifies steps for improved coordination in response to incidents. This directive describes the way Federal departments and agencies will prepare for such a response, including prevention activities during the early stages of a terrorism incident.

Development of a National Preparedness Goal

(4) The Secretary is the principal Federal official for coordinating the implementation of all-hazards preparedness in the United States. In cooperation with other Federal departments and agencies, the Secretary coordinates the preparedness of Federal response assets, and the support for, and assessment of, the preparedness of State and local first responders.

(5) To help ensure the preparedness of the Nation to prevent, respond to, and recover from threatened and actual domestic terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies, the Secretary, in coordination with the heads of other appropriate Federal

(7) The Secretary will submit the national preparedness goal to me through the Homeland Security Council (HSC) for review and approval prior to, or concurrently with, the Department of Homeland Security’s Fiscal Year 2006 budget submission to the Office of Management and Budget.

Federal Preparedness Assistance

(8) The Secretary, in coordination with the Attorney General, the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the heads of other Federal departments and agencies that provide assistance for first responder preparedness, will establish a single point of access to Federal preparedness assistance program information within 60 days of the issuance of this directive. The Secretary will submit to me through the HSC recommendations of specific Federal department and agency programs to be part of the coordinated approach. All Federal departments and agencies will cooperate with this

effort. Agencies will continue to issue financial assistance awards consistent with applicable laws and regulations and will ensure that program announcements, solicitations, application instructions, and other guidance documents are consistent with other Federal preparedness programs to the extent possible. Full implementation of a closely coordinated interagency grant process will be completed by September 30, 2005.

(9) To the extent permitted by law, the primary mechanism for delivery of Federal preparedness assistance will be awards to the States. Awards will be delivered in a form that allows the recipients to apply the assistance to the highest priority preparedness requirements at the appropriate level of government. To the extent permitted by law, Federal preparedness assistance will be predicated on adoption of Statewide comprehensive all-hazards preparedness strategies. The strategies should be consistent with the national preparedness goal, should assess the most effective ways to enhance preparedness, should address areas facing higher risk, especially to terrorism, and should also address local government concerns and Citizen Corps efforts. The Secretary, in coordination with the heads of other appropriate Federal departments and agencies, will review and approve strategies submitted by the States. To the extent permitted by law, adoption of approved Statewide strategies will be a requirement for receiving Federal preparedness assistance at all levels of government by September 30, 2005.

(10) In making allocations of Federal preparedness assistance to the States, the Secretary, the Attorney General, the Secretary of HHS, the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Energy, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the heads of other Federal departments and agencies that provide assistance for first responder preparedness will base those allocations on assessments of population concentrations, critical infrastructures, and other significant risk factors, particularly terrorism threats, to the extent permitted by law.

(11) Federal preparedness assistance will support State and local entities' efforts including planning, training, exercises, inter-

operability, and equipment acquisition for major events as well as capacity building for prevention activities such as information gathering, detection, deterrence, and collaboration related to terrorist attacks. Such assistance is not primarily intended to support existing capacity to address normal local first responder operations, but to build capacity to address major events, especially terrorism.

(12) The Attorney General, the Secretary of HHS, the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Energy, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the heads of other Federal departments and agencies that provide assistance for first responder preparedness shall coordinate with the Secretary to ensure that such assistance supports and is consistent with the national preparedness goal.

(13) Federal departments and agencies will develop appropriate mechanisms to ensure rapid obligation and disbursement of funds from their programs to the States, from States to the local community level, and from local entities to the end users to derive maximum benefit from the assistance provided. Federal departments and agencies will report annually to the Secretary on the obligation, expenditure status, and the use of funds associated with Federal preparedness assistance programs.

Equipment

(14) The Secretary, in coordination with State and local officials, first responder organizations, the private sector and other Federal civilian departments and agencies, shall establish and implement streamlined procedures for the ongoing development and adoption of appropriate first responder equipment standards that support nationwide interoperability and other capabilities consistent with the national preparedness goal, including the safety and health of first responders.

(15) To the extent permitted by law, equipment purchased through Federal preparedness assistance for first responders shall conform to equipment standards in place at

time of purchase. Other Federal departments and agencies that support the purchase of first responder equipment will coordinate their programs with the Department of Homeland Security and conform to the same standards.

(16) The Secretary, in coordination with other appropriate Federal departments and agencies and in consultation with State and local governments, will develop plans to identify and address national first responder equipment research and development needs based upon assessments of current and future threats. Other Federal departments and agencies that support preparedness research and development activities shall coordinate their efforts with the Department of Homeland Security and ensure they support the national preparedness goal.

Training and Exercises

(17) The Secretary, in coordination with the Secretary of HHS, the Attorney General, and other appropriate Federal departments and agencies and in consultation with State and local governments, shall establish and maintain a comprehensive training program to meet the national preparedness goal. The program will identify standards and maximize the effectiveness of existing Federal programs and financial assistance and include training for the Nation's first responders, officials, and others with major event preparedness, prevention, response, and recovery roles. Federal departments and agencies shall include private organizations in the accreditation and delivery of preparedness training as appropriate and to the extent permitted by law.

(18) The Secretary, in coordination with other appropriate Federal departments and agencies, shall establish a national program and a multi-year planning system to conduct homeland security preparedness-related exercises that reinforces identified training standards, provides for evaluation of readiness, and supports the national preparedness goal. The establishment and maintenance of the program will be conducted in maximum collaboration with State and local governments and appropriate private sector entities. All Federal departments and agencies that conduct national homeland security pre-

paredness-related exercises shall participate in a collaborative, interagency process to designate such exercises on a consensus basis and create a master exercise calendar. The Secretary will ensure that exercises included in the calendar support the national preparedness goal. At the time of designation, Federal departments and agencies will identify their level of participation in national homeland security preparedness-related exercises. The Secretary will develop a multi-year national homeland security preparedness-related exercise plan and submit the plan to me through the HSC for review and approval.

(19) The Secretary shall develop and maintain a system to collect, analyze, and disseminate lessons learned, best practices, and information from exercises, training events, research, and other sources, including actual incidents, and establish procedures to improve national preparedness to prevent, respond to, and recover from major events. The Secretary, in coordination with other Federal departments and agencies and State and local governments, will identify relevant classes of homeland-security related information and appropriate means of transmission for the information to be included in the system. Federal departments and agencies are directed, and State and local governments are requested, to provide this information to the Secretary to the extent permitted by law.

Federal Department and Agency Preparedness

(20) The head of each Federal department or agency shall undertake actions to support the national preparedness goal, including adoption of quantifiable performance measurements in the areas of training, planning, equipment, and exercises for Federal incident management and asset preparedness, to the extent permitted by law. Specialized Federal assets such as teams, stockpiles, and caches shall be maintained at levels consistent with the national preparedness goal and be available for response activities as set forth in the National Response Plan, other appropriate operational documents, and applicable authorities or guidance. Relevant Federal regulatory requirements should be consistent with the national preparedness

goal. Nothing in this directive shall limit the authority of the Secretary of Defense with regard to the command and control, training, planning, equipment, exercises, or employment of Department of Defense forces, or the allocation of Department of Defense resources.

(21) The Secretary, in coordination with other appropriate Federal civilian departments and agencies, shall develop and maintain a Federal response capability inventory that includes the performance parameters of the capability, the timeframe within which the capability can be brought to bear on an incident, and the readiness of such capability to respond to domestic incidents. The Department of Defense will provide to the Secretary information describing the organizations and functions within the Department of Defense that may be utilized to provide support to civil authorities during a domestic crisis.

Citizen Participation

(22) The Secretary shall work with other appropriate Federal departments and agencies as well as State and local governments and the private sector to encourage active citizen participation and involvement in preparedness efforts. The Secretary shall periodically review and identify the best community practices for integrating private citizen capabilities into local preparedness efforts.

Public Communication

(23) The Secretary, in consultation with other Federal departments and agencies, State and local governments, and non-governmental organizations, shall develop a comprehensive plan to provide accurate and timely preparedness information to public citizens, first responders, units of government, the private sector, and other interested parties and mechanisms for coordination at all levels of government.

Assessment and Evaluation

(24) The Secretary shall provide to me through the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security an annual status report of the Nation's level of preparedness, including State capabilities, the readiness of Federal civil response assets, the utilization of

mutual aid, and an assessment of how the Federal first responder preparedness assistance programs support the national preparedness goal. The first report will be provided within 1 year of establishment of the national preparedness goal.

(25) Nothing in this directive alters, or impedes the ability to carry out, the authorities of the Federal departments and agencies to perform their responsibilities under law and consistent with applicable legal authorities and presidential guidance.

(26) Actions pertaining to the funding and administration of financial assistance and all other activities, efforts, and policies in this directive shall be executed in accordance with law. To the extent permitted by law, these policies will be established and carried out in consultation with State and local governments.

(27) This directive is intended only to improve the internal management of the executive branch of the Federal Government, and it is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, against the United States, its departments, agencies, or other entities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

George W. Bush

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives on Providing Funds for the Department of the Treasury's Counterterrorism Fund

December 17, 2003

Dear Mr. Speaker:

In accordance with provisions of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2001 (Public Law 106-554), I hereby request and make available \$7 million for the Department of the Treasury's Counterterrorism Fund. I hereby designate this \$7 million as an emergency requirement pursuant to Public Law 106-554.

These funds would support Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Service Agents in overseas and domestic counterterrorism efforts.

The details of this action are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

**Remarks to Medical Personnel at
Walter Reed Army Medical Center
December 18, 2003**

Thank you all very much. Thanks for the warm welcome. Laura and I are thrilled to be here at the Army Medical Center. We're thrilled because this is a place of love and healing and great compassion. This center has a great history and an important mission, and that is, you are serving those who serve our country. In this time of war—and we are at war with an enemy that hates what America stands for—the good people of Walter Reed are giving the best of care to the men and women who have been wounded in action. During a difficult time in their lives, they count on you. You give them the kind, professional care and decency and hope they deserve. And on behalf of America, I thank you for your service.

Laura and I have had a great visit here. I know I'm not supposed to get out of my lane and give medical reports—[*laughter*—] but I can report that Colin Powell received great health care here and he is doing very well.

I want to thank General Kiley and Babs for your hospitality again. I appreciate Colonel Jaffin. I appreciate Colonel B.J. Mielcarek. She is—she's been kind of looking after my body on occasion too. [*Laughter*] Fortunately, she's got a lot to work with. [*Laughter*] But she's in charge of the physical therapy services. We've just come from her department where we saw some incredible work being done and some brave soldiers who are working hard to get to 100 percent.

I appreciate Colonel Saulsbery, deputy commander for nursing; Colonel Greenwood; Colonel Fitzpatrick. And thank you all. I really appreciate the hard-working staff, the docs, the nurses, the people who make this fantastic facility operate in a way that makes me proud and in a way that will make every American proud when they learn your story.

Each one of you has got a demanding job, and it's a tough job here. I've seen your work firsthand. I know how tough it is. But I also know that you count it as a privilege to look after some exceptional Americans, people who are willing to sacrifice for their country.

When I spend time with members of our military, I'm impressed by the idealism and the concern for each other and the strong sense of duty that our soldiers feel. Members of the Armed Forces are now serving in a great cause, serving in an historic time. Peace and security of our fellow citizens depend upon their bravery and their willingness to serve. In so doing, our soldiers accept the dangers and the hardships that this cause sometimes requires. You know them well. I'm coming to know them. They're the finest of our citizens.

If you spend any time with these young men and women, you know that whether it's on the battlefield or in the hospital, our men and women are always thinking of one another. Even after being wounded, they often speak about returning to their units. And these aren't idle words. These are words that come from people who have seen the true nature of combat. I'm proud to be their Commander in Chief. I'm proud to lead such fine men and women who are willing to sacrifice for their country.

There's something else the wounded say, and they say it often, and they say it clearly. They praise you all, and they praise the incredible health care they receive here at Walter Reed. The doctors and nurses here are superb and dedicated and tireless. The administrative staff and the patient advocates and the chaplains are incredibly committed Americans and compassionate souls. You show concern for the patients, and you love their families as well. You give attention to the medical needs, to the emotional needs, and to the spiritual needs of those recently removed from the battlefield.

I want to thank the volunteers at Walter Reed. Many of you are veterans. Many of you have known war injuries of your own. You're a source of inspiration and your good advice for people who are in recovery. The country is grateful for your service in the past, and your country is very grateful for your continued service to help lift the spirits

of those who have been wounded on the battlefield.

Military medicine is a model of professionalism and organization. It starts with the combat medic, the combat medic who is on the scene, the first health care a wounded soldier receives within moments of the injury. Patients are then treated by forward surgical teams and at combat support hospitals. I found it interesting that Walter Reed has more than 60 of its staff serving in the Iraqi theater today. You've moved your great medicine from this fantastic facility to the battlefield so that our soldiers get instant professional care.

Our wounded troops might next go to Landstuhl Medical Center in Germany, where they receive fine medical treatment before being delivered into your hands. Our fellow citizens must understand that every stop that a soldier makes from battlefield to Walter Reed is manned by a staff trained in every skill of trauma medicine.

This morning, I had a chance to visit, as I said, B.J.'s shop, which is the physical and occupational therapy facilities. Walter Reed is second to none in this kind of medicine. You're using the latest prosthetic technology to help patients overcome great challenges and resume their lives. I know firsthand—I remember coming here a couple of months ago to pin the Purple Heart on a fellow who lost both legs and one arm. Today I saw him walking. What makes this story even more profound is, he lost both legs and one arm not as a citizen of the United States but as a soldier fighting for the United States. Today I saw a citizen of the United States walking.

Americans would be surprised to learn that a grievous injury such as the loss of a limb no longer means forced discharge. In other words, the medical care is so good, and the recovery process is so technologically advanced, that people are no longer forced out of the military. When we're talking about forced discharge, we're talking about another age and another army. This is a new age, and this is a new army. And today, if wound-

ed servicemembers want to remain in uniform and can do the job, the military tries to help them stay.

This country takes—asks a great deal of the men and women who serve our military. We're asking a lot of them, particularly in the first war of the 21st century. We put a lot of fine troops into harm's way to make this country more secure and the world more free and the world more peaceful. We ask them to face great dangers to meet a national need. In return, we have made a commitment. We have made a commitment to the troops, and we have made a commitment to their loved ones, and that commitment is that we will provide excellent health care—excellent care—to anybody who is injured on the battlefield.

Here at Walter Reed, all of you are making good on that commitment. You're saving the lives of liberators. You're healing the defenders of our country. You're comforting the champions of freedom. For that, every single person who works here has the respect and the gratitude of our entire Nation.

All of you here today are engaged in a great cause, a noble cause, an important cause for our country and for freedom and peace. By your good work, you're helping to protect America. And for that, your Commander in Chief says God bless, and thank you.

Happy holidays. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at noon in the Lawrence Joel Auditorium. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Kevin Kiley, USA, commanding general, North Atlantic Regional Medical Command and Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and his wife, Babs; Col. Jonathan Jaffin, USA, commander, Walter Reed Health Care System; and Col. Billie Mielcarek, USA, chief of physical therapy, Col. Patricia A.H. Saulsbery, USA, deputy commander for nursing, Col. Jim Greenwood, USA, deputy commander for administration, and Col. Thomas M. Fitzpatrick, USA, deputy commander for clinical services, Walter Reed Army Medical Center. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Message on the Observance of Hanukkah 2003

December 19, 2003

I send greetings to all those celebrating Hanukkah, the festival of lights.

During Hanukkah, people of the Jewish faith around the world mark the triumph of Jews against tyranny and oppression more than two millennia ago. With courage and unfailing faith, the Maccabees secured the Jewish people's freedom and reclaimed the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. As they prepared to rededicate the Temple, there was only enough oil for one day, but the light continued to burn for eight days. Today, the lighting of the Menorah represents this ancient miracle and brings a message of hope and freedom to the Jewish people.

As families and friends share in the joyous traditions of Hanukkah, we recognize the power of faith to accomplish miracles and bring light from the darkness. We join in giving thanks for the blessings God has granted to our Nation. May the joy of Hanukkah and the peace and goodwill of the season fill our hearts and inspire us to lead lives of compassion.

Laura joins me in wishing you a blessed and Happy Hanukkah.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Message on the Observance of Christmas 2003

December 19, 2003

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Luke 2:14

As families and friends gather to celebrate Christmas, we remember all the blessings that fill our lives, beginning with the great blessing that came on a holy night in Bethlehem. For Christians around the world, the birth of Jesus is a central religious event; an example of God's profound love for humanity; and the pathway to hope and to new life.

Today, the Christmas story still speaks to every generation.

This holiday season, as we share in the spirit of giving and enjoy familiar Christmas traditions, we give thanks for the wonder of God's love and rededicate ourselves to helping those in need. We also pray for our brave men and women in uniform, many of whom will spend the holidays far from home. Their courage and dedication is helping keep us safe and extending freedom and peace. We are grateful for their service to our country, and for the support and sacrifice of their families.

Laura joins me in wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. May the peace and goodwill of the season fill every heart and warm every home.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Message on the Observance of Kwanzaa 2003

December 19, 2003

I send greetings to those observing Kwanzaa.

Celebrated by millions across the world, Kwanzaa honors the history and heritage of Africa. This seven-day observance is an opportunity for individuals of African descent to remember the sacrifices of their ancestors and reflect on the *Nguzo Saba*. Kwanzaa's seven social and spiritual principles offer strength and guidance to meet the challenges of each new day.

During this joyous time of year, Americans renew our commitment to hope, understanding, and the great promise of our Nation. In honoring the traditions of Africa, Kwanzaa strengthens the ties that bind individuals in communities across our country and around the world.

Laura joins me in sending our best wishes for a joyous Kwanzaa.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

December 13

In the morning, at Camp David, MD, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in a telephone conversation with Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, the President received notice of the possible capture of former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq by U.S. military personnel in Tikrit, Iraq. Later, he had another telephone conversation with Secretary Rumsfeld to discuss further information on the possible capture. He then had separate telephone conversations with Vice President Dick Cheney and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice to notify them of the possible capture.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC.

December 14

In the morning, in a telephone conversation with National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, the President received confirmation of the capture of former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. He then had separate telephone conversations with Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, and Central Intelligence Agency Director George J. Tenet to inform them of the capture. The President and Mrs. Bush also watched television coverage of the briefing in Baghdad by L. Paul Bremer III, Presidential Envoy to Iraq, announcing the capture.

Later in the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Adnan Pachachi, Acting President of the Governing Council of Iraq, to express his congratulations. He also had separate telephone conversations with Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld; Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA, combatant commander, U.S. Central Command; Secretary of State Colin L. Powell; and President Jose Maria Aznar of Spain to

discuss the capture. Also in the morning, the President had a briefing on details of the capture.

In the evening, at the National Building Museum, the President and Mrs. Bush participated in the taping of the annual "Christmas in Washington" concert for later television broadcast.

December 15

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Paul Martin of Canada to discuss Canada-U.S. relations. He then had an intelligence briefing.

Later in the morning, the President met with Iraqi Minister of Health Khadir Abbas; Rend Rahim Francke, Head of the Iraq Interests Section in the U.S.; and a group of Iraqi doctors to discuss health care in Iraq.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the funeral of former President Heydar Aliyev of Azerbaijan: Brent Scowcroft (head of delegation), Sam Brownback, A. Elizabeth Jones, and Reno L. Harnish.

December 16

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan to discuss the completion of the Afghan national highway from Kabul to Kandahar and other developments in Afghanistan. He then had an intelligence briefing.

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a photo opportunity for the Pediatric Equity Research Act of 2003 and a signing ceremony for the Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing Act of 2003. Later, he participated in an interview with Diane Sawyer of ABC News.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in separate signing ceremonies for the National Museum of African American History and Culture Act and the Veterans Benefits Act of 2003. He then participated in separate photo opportunities for the Vision 100—Century of Aviation Reauthorization Act and the Hometown Heroes Survivors Benefits Act of 2003.

Later in the afternoon, at Blair House, the President and Mrs. Bush attended the diplomatic corps holiday reception.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with James A. Baker III, his personal envoy on the issue of Iraqi debt, concerning Secretary Baker's discussions with President Jacques Chirac of France and Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany.

In the evening, the President attended holiday receptions.

December 17

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Kill Devil Hills, NC.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

In the evening, the President attended holiday receptions.

December 18

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, he had an MRI examination of his knees, followed by a brief visit with Secretary of State Colin L. Powell, who was recovering from surgery. He then visited U.S. military personnel injured in Iraq and Afghanistan and awarded Purple Hearts to several of them.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with President Alvaro Uribe of Colombia to discuss the capture of former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq, Colombia's fight against drugs and terrorism, and bilateral and regional issues. Later, he had a telephone conversation with President Vicente Fox of Mexico to discuss the capture and bilateral and regional issues.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush attended a holiday reception.

December 19

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he met with Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy G. Thompson and Director of National Drug Control Policy John P. Walters to discuss progress toward the President's goals for reducing drug use.

Also in the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Secretary-Gen-

eral Kofi Annan of the United Nations to exchange holiday greetings.

In the afternoon, the President met with James A. Baker III, his personal envoy on the issue of Iraqi debt.

In the evening, the President had a holiday dinner with senior White House staff.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Monterrey, Mexico, on January 12–13, 2004, to attend the Special Summit of the Americas.

The President announced his intention to designate Mark J. Warshawsky as Acting Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Economic Policy.

The President announced his intention to designate Gordon H. Mansfield as Acting Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

The President declared a major disaster in the Federated States of Micronesia and ordered Federal aid to supplement national and State recovery efforts in the area struck by Typhoon Lupit on November 22–26.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

NOTE: No nominations were submitted to the Senate during the period covered by this issue.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released December 13

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2417

Fact sheet: 2003: A Year of Accomplishment for the American People

Released December 14

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Released December 15

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing the designation of a Presidential delegation to attend the funeral of His Excellency Heydar Aliyev, former President of Azerbaijan

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.J. Res. 80, H.R. 1437, H.R. 1813, H.R. 3287, and S. 459

Fact sheet: Facts About the New Iraqi Healthcare System

Released December 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary on the French, German, U.S. agreement on Iraqi debt restructuring

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.J. Res. 82 and S. 877

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3491, H.R. 2297, and S. 811

Fact sheet: Expanding Homeownership Opportunities for All Americans

Fact sheet: President Bush Signs Anti-Spam Law

Released December 17

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary on Special Presidential Envoy James A. Baker III's meeting with Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.J. Res. 63

Released December 18

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Medical Summary: The President's Orthopedic Exam

Released December 19

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary: President To Attend Special Summit of the Americas

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 100, H.R. 622, H.R. 1006, H.R. 1012, H.R. 2620, S. 686, S. 1680, S. 1683, S. 1929, and S. 1947

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to the Federated States of Micronesia

Fact sheet: The President's National Security Strategy To Combat WMD

Acts Approved by the President

Approved December 13

H.R. 2417 / Public Law 108-177
Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004

Approved December 15

H.R. 1437 / Public Law 108-178
To improve the United States Code

H.R. 1813 / Public Law 108-179
Torture Victims Relief Reauthorization Act of 2003

H.R. 3287 / Public Law 108-180
To award congressional gold medals posthumously on behalf of Reverend Joseph A. DeLaine, Harry and Eliza Briggs, and Levi Pearson in recognition of their contributions to the Nation as pioneers in the effort to desegregate public schools that led directly to the landmark desegregation case of *Brown et al. v. the Board of Education of Topeka et al.*

H.J. Res. 80 / Public Law 108–181
Appointing the day for the convening of the second session of the One Hundred Eighth Congress

S. 459 / Public Law 108–182
Hometown Heroes Survivors Benefits Act of 2003

Approved December 16

H.R. 2297 / Public Law 108–183
Veterans Benefits Act of 2003

H.R. 3491 / Public Law 108–184
National Museum of African American History and Culture Act

H.J. Res. 82 / Public Law 108–185
Making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2004, and for other purposes

S. 811 / Public Law 108–186
To support certain housing proposals in the fiscal year 2003 budget for the Federal Government, including the downpayment assistance initiative under the HOME Investment Partnership Act, and for other purposes

S. 877 / Public Law 108–187
Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing Act of 2003

Approved December 17

H.J. Res. 63 / Public Law 108–188
Compact of Free Association Amendments Act of 2003

Approved December 19

H.R. 100 / Public Law 108–189
Servicemembers Civil Relief Act

H.R. 622 / Public Law 108–190
To provide for the exchange of certain lands in the Coconino and Tonto National Forests in Arizona, and for other purposes

H.R. 1006 / Public Law 108–191
Captive Wildlife Safety Act

H.R. 1012 / Public Law 108–192
Carter G. Woodson Home National Historic Site Act

H.R. 2620 / Public Law 108–193
Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2003

S. 686 / Public Law 108–194
Poison Control Center Enhancement and Awareness Act Amendments of 2003

S. 1680 / Public Law 108–195
Defense Production Act Reauthorization of 2003

S. 1683 / Public Law 108–196
Federal Law Enforcement Pay and Benefits Parity Act of 2003

S. 1929 / Public Law 108–197
Mental Health Parity Reauthorization Act of 2003

S. 1947 / Public Law 108–198
Preserving Independence of Financial Institution Examinations Act of 2003